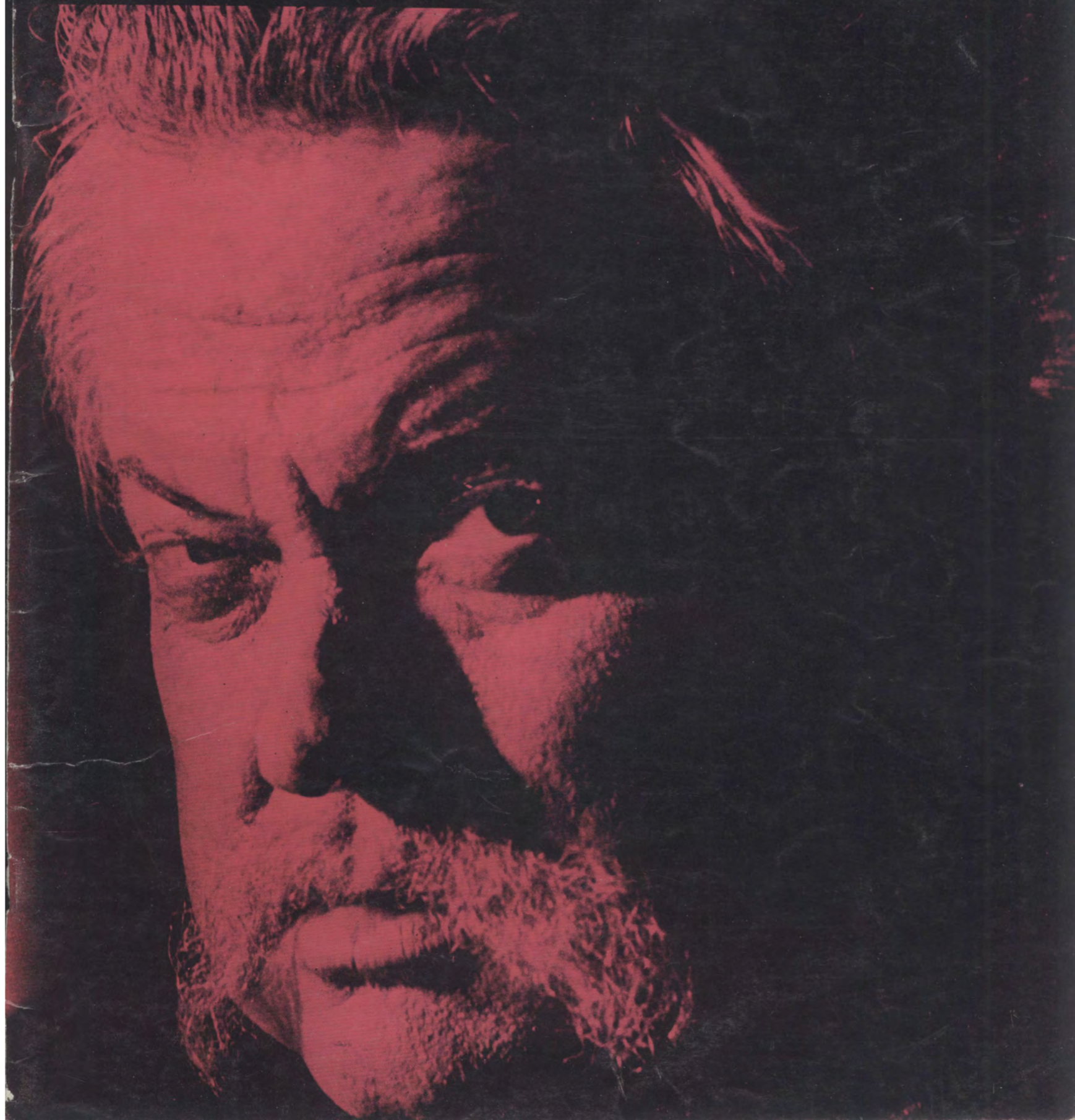


SIGHT AND SOUND

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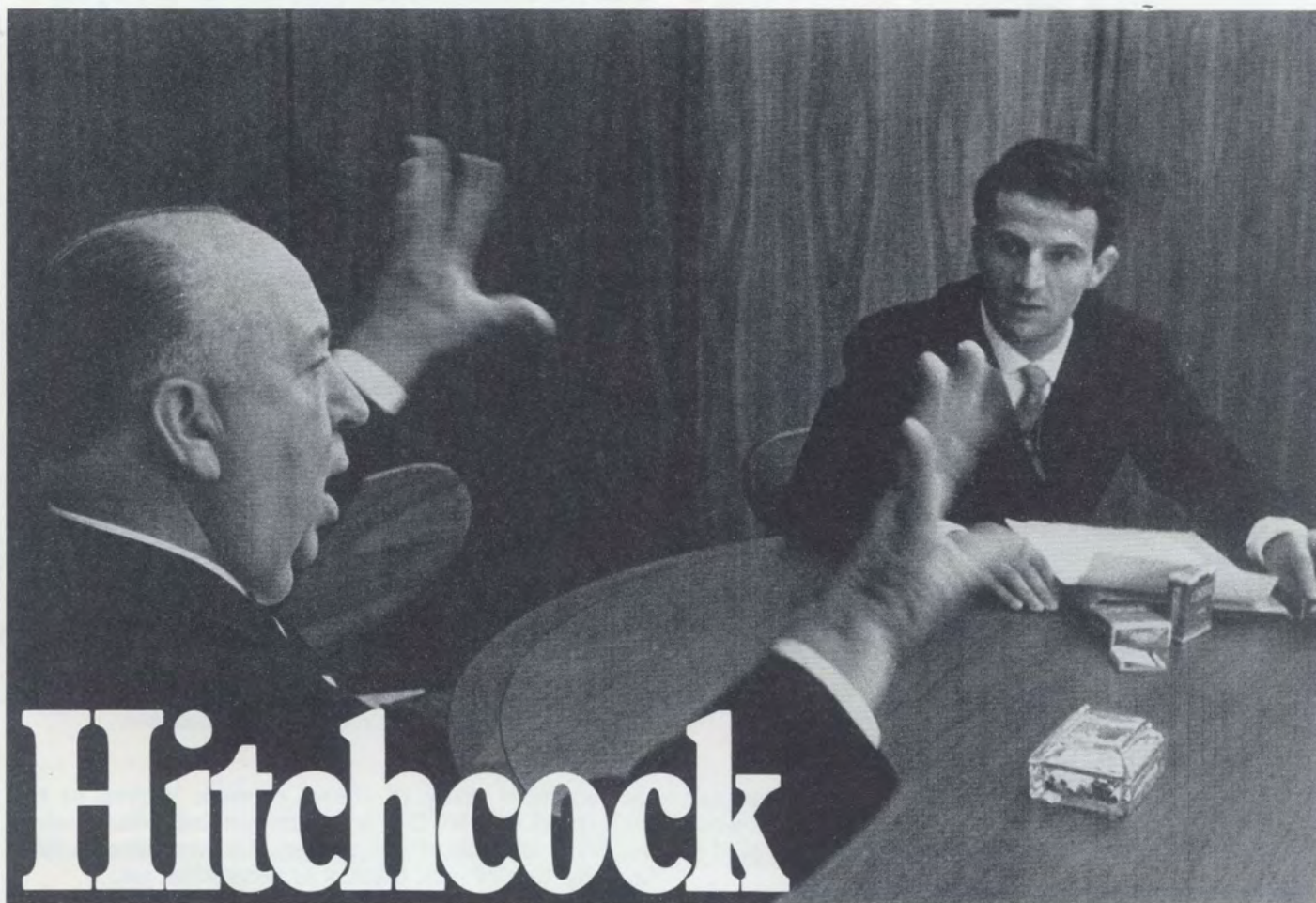
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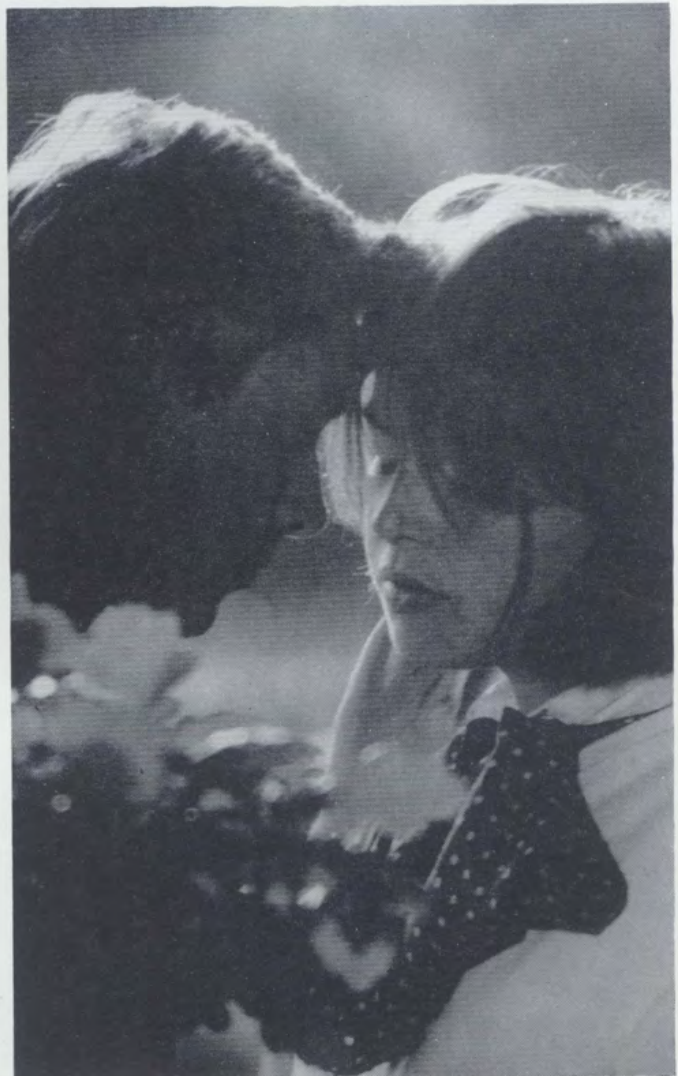
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SIGHT AND SOUND

THE INTERNATIONAL FILM QUARTERLY

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'The Immortal Story'.

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The
difference of
**GEORGE
AXELROD**

Tom
Milne



GEORGE AXELROD is a large, amiable man, playwright and brilliant scriptwriter of such films as *The Seven Year Itch*, *Phffft!*, *Bus Stop*, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, *The Manchurian Candidate*, *How to Murder Your Wife*. "I know more old jokes than any human being alive," he admits, cheerfully acknowledging a long, arduous training in radio and TV, writing—among other things—some of the early Martin and Lewis shows. Three years ago he made his debut as a director, and upset a good many sensibilities when *Lord Love a Duck* turned out to be a minor key *L'Age d'Or*. His equally unconventional second film, *The Secret Life of an American Wife*, awaits release in Britain.

Was it as a direct result of THE SEVEN YEAR ITCH that you first went to Hollywood?

AXELROD: That was my first play and my first real success. The theatre was very good to me . . . it kicked me off my TV track. I checked once and lost count, but I did around 400 radio and television scripts. Some of them are now camp in America, the old 'Shadow' scripts I wrote for radio before the war, for instance—wrote in deadly earnest, and now they're funny as hell. For two years after the war, in addition to TV scripts, I wrote a hillbilly show called 'Grand Ole Opry', and for 104 consecutive weeks used to write 40 jokes a week. The guy I was writing for was a hillbilly comic called Rod Brassfield, and he would never use a joke he didn't know; so it was more a matter of anthologising jokes than writing them. I know more old jokes than any human being alive.

I had always been interested in films. As a matter of fact, I had a second play all written and ready to go after *The Seven Year Itch*. It was called *Phffft!*. At the time I was in the process of getting a divorce from my first wife. The whole thing was just too ugly and I wanted to get out of town; so, although we had the money raised, I said the play wasn't good enough and called it off. On the day this was announced, Harry Cohn, head of Columbia, called to say it would make a great movie for Judy Holliday. And this helped motivate my going to Hollywood for the first time. I found I just loved it. I was so inured to writing TV shows, though, that in the first draft of the screenplay of *Phffft!* I left time for Judy to make costume changes. I'd play a scene between the butler and the maid, just automatically, without thinking.

Did you work on the script while it was being shot?

I started by managing this rather badly, and did it badly for several films. I would go out to Hollywood for meetings, then go back to New York and write the script. *Phffft!* I actually wrote out there, but did not stay for the production. At that time I regarded movies as a second career, and had that terrible New York writer's snobbery about it: take the loot and scoot was the idea. That persisted for a while, until after *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, when I complained bitterly, went out and screamed and yelled, had a big fight about everything. So Billy Wilder, who was my sort of godfather out there, said, "Look, you simply have no right to sit in New York, mail scripts in, cash the cheques, and then complain about the pictures. If you wish to see a picture through, come out and see it through." From that point on, I started as a writer-producer. *The Manchurian Candidate* was the first: actually, John Frankenheimer and I co-produced it, but Johnny spent most of the time directing, so that really I did most of the producing.

There's a funny story about that, and it's quite truthful. Frankenheimer is a very temperamental man, so is Frank Sinatra. They had never met and were both wary as hell of each other. I'd had several meetings with Frank about the

picture—because when a movie star wants to do something desperately, he always has one thing in it he wants to do, and you have to work out what it is and play on it. I had persuaded Frank to agree to rehearse—which was extraordinary enough—but he still hadn't met Frankenheimer. On the night before the first rehearsal, Frankenheimer came to my house in Hollywood, belligerent out of sheer terror, saying, "I'm not going to do this picture if this man gives me one bit of trouble. I'll punch him on the nose and walk off the set. And none of this one-take nonsense." I calmed him down and said, "Now, the following thing is going to happen. Tomorrow, at the meeting with Frank, when I give you a signal, you are to say the following words exactly. 'In the scene on the train, if the audience does not feel that Marco would have flung himself under the wheels had he not met the girl at that moment, then we have failed in the scene.'" So when I gave the signal he said exactly those words. Frank jumped up and said, "That's exactly what I was saying to George the other day . . ."

Actually there were two things Frank wanted to do in the picture. He loved the conception of having the Korean chap arrive at the door of his flat and in a split second punch him in the nose. He talked about that endlessly too. But *The Manchurian Candidate* came off because Frank was at his best, Larry Harvey was at his best, and Frankenheimer did a brilliant job. It has had a funny history in the United States, and indeed in the world. It went from failure to classic without ever passing through success. It has not yet made its money back, although they show it all the time at film societies and so on. There's an axiom in Hollywood that nobody wants to see anything about brainwashing or politics. As Billy Wilder told me early in the game, "My dear boy, you and I will leave political satire to others. You and I will write about screwing and become very rich."

The novel was an extremely interesting job to adapt. I found that what I liked most about it—other than the central theme—was Condon's descriptive prose; so what we did, rather craftily, was take a lot of this descriptive prose and turn it into dialogue. Of course it had to be reconstructed. There was no way to do the brainwashing scene for real, so we did it as Marco's nightmare. And then picked it up again as the brainwasher Yen Lo's joke by having the corporal who had the same nightmare be a negro.

So the famous 360 degree pan was a scriptwriter's invention?

Not really. What happened was, I knew what I wanted and Frankenheimer figured out how to do it. Then, as a matter of fact, I cut the sequence. How this happened was that one of the crafty ways one works with Sinatra is to put all his scenes first. You get him in and out of the picture as fast as you can because his attention span is, one could say, somewhat limited. We got him in and out in 23 days. As he was leaving town, he wanted to see a rough cut of all his scenes, and the one thing we hadn't touched was this complicated dream sequence, on which we must have shot about 6,000 ft. So I said, "Look, I know what it should be, let me make a rough cut. I'll just cut from script." So the cutter and I went away and did it in about half-an-hour. And we never changed it.

How do you feel about THE SEVEN YEAR ITCH?

I didn't like it as a picture. Billy and I had too good a time writing it . . . we began to amuse ourselves. The play itself—I'm not trying to be boastful, I was lucky—was very tightly constructed, and once you start fooling around with the construction to open it up, you lose its essence. Also in those days we had terrible censorship troubles. The third act of the play was the guy having hilarious guilts about having been to bed with the girl; but as he had not been to bed with her in the picture, all his guilts were for nothing. So the last act of the picture kind of went down hill.

Isn't the difference between play and film also partly due to the casting of Marilyn Monroe?

In honesty I suspect that's so. Marilyn, whom I adored above all creatures, really unbalanced the film. The girl was

secondary in the play, it was the guy's play, but nobody was secondary to Marilyn, ever. So she lopsided the film a little bit.

There was also a rather touching element in the play . . .

In the last act, when he says goodbye to the girl and decides to go back to his wife, there's a little moment there because she's innocent and sweet about it. It doesn't come across in the film. Again, really no fault of Marilyn, other than that she really had nothing to be touching about: they'd had no affair. An odd footnote to it is that I compelled Billy Wilder to test an actor he'd never heard of called Walter Matthau for the part, just in case Tom Ewell didn't work out for it. And that's how Billy met Walter. He's done well with him. So have I. He can play anything; I think he's one of the finest American film actors, and indeed stage actors, except he won't do stage any more. Walter had a very serious heart attack a couple of years ago, and I don't think his doctor will let him get into anything where he has to sign a two-year contract, to play eight performances a week. Also the California climate is better for him, he walks five miles a day. He always was the world's greatest hypochondriac. Now not only is he a hypochondriac, he's an authority on heart transplants. Indeed, he's extremely dull on the subject . . . he'll discuss the passage of blood through the body endlessly.

How about BUS STOP?

I liked that very much. And I think even William Inge now concedes it is at least as good as the play. Because, given the necessities of the stage, he had to cram it all into that one set, whereas it was a play very susceptible to being opened up. It took Marilyn two years to realise that this was her best performance. Indeed, she did not speak to either Josh Logan or me for a year afterwards, because she felt we'd cut the picture in favour of the boy. Later she came to realise she was wrong. It suggests to me that actors have a very dim appreciation of what's good or what's bad about their performances. They're not enormously objective about them.

I believe Audrey Hepburn was very reluctant about BREAKFAST AT TIFFANY'S?

Oh, she was. The producer Martin Jurow and I spent a week in Cannes trying to persuade her that this would not damage whatever her idea of her image was. And indeed would be good for it. But she kept fighting to have the character softened, making that fatal actor's mistake of thinking they

LOVE LOCKED OUT . . . PATRICK O'NEAL AND ANNE JACKSON IN A FANTASY SEQUENCE FROM "THE SECRET LIFE OF AN AMERICAN WIFE".



are going to endear themselves to an audience by doing endearing things if the character is tough. Humphrey Bogart never made that mistake, and they loved him for his toughness. You should have loved Holly Golightly for her toughness, and the only thing wrong with Audrey's performance was that occasionally she permitted herself the indulgence of trying to be lovable. The key line in the script—and in Capote's novella—was that she collects fifty dollars for going to the ladies' room. Well, there was a major crisis on the set when she refused to say the line. I was back in New York when they called me from the set, and I spent half-an-hour with Audrey before we finally agreed to change it from 'Ladies' Room' to 'Powder Room'. There's no real difference—but she preferred it that way.

You obviously enjoy casting actors against type?

I find it a rewarding thing to do. One of the things that could probably be held against the so-called Hollywood movie is the expectability of performance from an actor. For example, in *The Secret Life of an American Wife*, where one of the characters is a movie star—and a movie star based, there's no point in hiding it, rather loosely on Frank Sinatra—the studio wanted the obvious choice: either Dean Martin, or Sinatra himself. I felt that with Walter Matthau I could get a more sensitive, more compassionate thing, but at the studio meeting the big argument was, would the audience believe that Matthau was a big sex symbol? But Sinatra's not beautiful. If you'd never heard of him and he walked into the room, would you believe he was a great American lover? He's a rather beat-up looking guy, with marvellous crazy, flashing blue eyes. Have you noticed, by the way, that all big male stars have blue eyes? Paul Newman, Bill Holden, Sinatra . . . One of the curious imponderables of our business.

I'm lucky enough to have had in the past a very good record with actors. This compensates for my lack of experience with camera and so on. Also I select the actors very carefully, not only for ability but for being persons with whom I do have a personal rapport. I use the same actors over and over again.

Do you encourage improvisation? For instance, all those marvellous noises Ruth Gordon makes in LORD LOVE A DUCK, are they hers, or . . .?

That was mostly her. Ruth is an extraordinary actress. In *Lord Love a Duck* she was the oldest member of the cast, but she was always first on the set in the morning, last to leave at night. A lot of the kids don't like to do off-stage dialogue for the other person's close-up, and will say, "Ah, let the script girl read it." But Ruth was always there. We discussed her performance in general first, but in each scene she'd give me three or four things and ask which I wanted. If I didn't like any of them, I'd make a suggestion and she'd say "Oh, got you, got you." Right, fast. She has an enormous technical working vocabulary—she can do anything, you just have to tell her what to do. Or let her demonstrate, and you select her wares.

The sweater scene in *Lord Love a Duck*, though, was almost totally improvised. In the script, apart from a couple of jokes, it was rather dull: the girl just seduces her father into buying her thirteen sweaters. Driving to the studio in the morning I suddenly thought, "Jesus! It's dull. Why don't we have a cashmere orgasm?" Tuesday Weld, Max Showalter (who plays the father: another actor I've used over and over again) and I sat around the dressing-room and talked about it while they were re-dressing the set for sweaters, sending out for cashmere of all kinds, and the cameraman was beating his brains out, saying, "How can you do a scene in black and white where they talk about the colours of sweaters?" I said, "It's the only way you can do it, don't you understand? There is no such thing as 'papaya put-on'—it's much better to imagine it." We all got ourselves into a state of such high elation that at one point Tuesday rolled off the couch, roaring with laughter and gasping "Oh, no!" I just kept it in, she's so obviously enjoying herself.

The function of a director, my kind of director, is really in the end to be a seducer. You have to get the cast and the crew and everybody to love you. In the psychoanalytic sense of a transference. So I have a whole directing act. I have a costume I wear, for God's sake, a big white towel I wear round my



WALTER MATTHAU IN "THE SECRET LIFE OF AN AMERICAN WIFE".

neck so I look a little bit like a prize-fighter, and I never sit down on the set. I have a huge leather chair with my name on it, but it has no seat. The first day I make an announcement: if anybody ever catches me sitting down on the set it's a wrap for the day. It also knocks three or four days off the shooting schedule. If you pace around behind the cameraman when he's lighting the set rather than lie down in the dressing-room, it gets lit a lot faster. The towel is something I hang on to, a security blanket. I can play with it, wipe my face with it, and hide behind it when I'm trying to find out what the hell we are going to do next.

Tuesday is a great natural actress. She can really cry, not just turn it on. After the emotional scene in *Lord Love a Duck* where she finds her mother has committed suicide, she was a physical wreck for the rest of the day. We did that in two takes, really. Just the master and a couple of close shots. But she was sobbing, physically ill afterwards. She got married during the course of the picture, and hence was pregnant when they wanted her for *Bonnie and Clyde*, for which she was first choice. Of course she was heartsick about that: it's a scar she'll bear a long time.

You were involved in BONNIE AND CLYDE yourself originally, weren't you?

I had a shot at it first, but United Artists didn't want to do it. There were a lot of legal entanglements and they were very reluctant to let me direct it, an action picture: "You can do comedy, but what the hell do you know about this kind of thing?" By the time we'd got through arguing, Warren Beatty had grabbed it. I must say he and Penn did a brilliant job. I wish to hell I'd done it, that's all I can say. I wish Tuesday had done it.

LORD LOVE A DUCK was your first film as a director. Did you have much difficulty in setting it up?

Normally I would have, but *How to Murder Your Wife*, which preceded it and which I scripted, was a big financial

success, so United Artists were keen to have me sign a contract. They would let me do almost anything provided it didn't cost too much. And indeed, I must say . . . Oh God! The thrill of directing is something not to be believed. I naturally prepared very carefully for my first days on the set so that I wouldn't have to come on there looking like an amateur. And I didn't really run into trouble until later.

I had tried to explain what the picture was going to be, telling United Artists not to pay too much attention to the novel on which it was based, because it wasn't going to be like that. "You must bear in mind that this picture is going to be different," I told them. "Wonderful," they said, "we love different pictures." They were very good about not bothering me while I made it, and nobody saw a foot of the film. So when I brought it to New York to show the executives, they were ashen when they came out of the projection room, saying, "You said this was going to be a different film . . . It's not a bit like *A Hard Day's Night*." I tried to explain to the gentlemen that a different film didn't have to be like the last different film. But what we have out there now is really three categories: we have Westerns, we have Sex Comedies, and we have Different Films.

How did you approach the visual style of the film?

You must understand that in Hollywood we have very complicated Union problems. Consequently, first cameramen out there are old gentlemen, their average age being 62 years: that's why they don't like hand-held cameras—they can't lift them. I wanted the picture in black and white, fought for it in black and white; so I had my key people come and look at three films I admired extravagantly—*8½*, *A Hard Day's Night* (so they could see what the previous different film looked like) and *The Manchurian Candidate*. Dutifully they all filed into the projection room, sighing—I could hear the sighs, terrible old wheezes—and when they got to know me a little better, each of them asked me privately, "Why did you make

us look at this garbage? What were you trying to prove?"

Those three films make complete sense in indicating the approach you wanted. But the film has a marvellous visual style of its own: a very bright, sharp quality.

It was a battle to get that. Quite a lot of the action plays in a tremendously sterile high school where they only teach automotive skills, hairdressing and so forth—it's one of those brand new complexes they build out there—and obviously no book has ever darkened the premises. In order to get that sterile effect, I wanted the walls painted as white as you could get and still be able to photograph them, harsh and glaring. I wanted blackboards that had obviously never been written on. I wanted the blacks black and the whites white. Very clean, very crisp. Every time I turned my back, the cameraman would be breaking down the walls with shadows, because that's the way they've always done them. And they loused up three blackboards by writing on them and erasing them. Every time I turned my back, the set would be dressed with books, bookshelves. "Out! Out!" Nobody on the picture, except Tuesday Weld really, and Roddy McDowall, ever understood what in hell it was we were trying to do. It was a mystery to the crew.

Were the Christ symbols in the film intentional?

Well . . . let me put it this way. They were intentional, but they were intentional on Roddy McDowall's part, not mine. It was his interpretation . . . he wanted it badly in order to give himself motivation for the part. Now that I've thought about the question for a second more, it's very curious, a strange dichotomy. I'm an atheist—not an agnostic, a card-carrying atheist—yet God and Christ symbols have figured in a lot of my work. The *Goodbye Charlie* thing as it was done on the stage . . . I don't know how it creeps in . . .

There is an ambivalence anyway in the symbolism: it might just as well be Lucifer in LORD LOVE A DUCK.

Yes . . . I have used the temptation theme a couple of times. *Goodbye Charlie* has it. So has *Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter*. I suppose on the superficial level, the temptation of the Faust story is that it is a cheap and easy way to give audiences wish fulfilment. You give a guy a bunch of wishes and then see him act it out—it's a marvellous dramatic theme. I really believe that most successful commercial pictures must have somewhere in them something that is the audience's unconscious wish. Like in *The Secret Life of an American Wife* . . . I know every woman in America secretly, deep down somewhere, has said to herself at some time or another, "Wouldn't it be marvellous to receive a hundred dollars for going to bed with Frank Sinatra one afternoon and get away with it?"

Quite apart from the fact that it is your first directing job, LORD LOVE A DUCK seems to be a turning point in your career. The keynote of your earlier work seems to be brilliant, brittle comedy or satire; with LORD LOVE A DUCK, an almost tragic, certainly deeply emotional element creeps in, so that the satire becomes much more serious.

God knows, I hope you're right. Perhaps part of this has to do with the fact that I directed these last two films myself; I think some of it was in some of the earlier scripts but got lost. *The Seven Year Itch*, for instance, or *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. *Lord Love a Duck* was a very serious picture as far as I was concerned. Like most writers, the stuff I do is autobiographical in some way—not factually, but emotionally. I'd been living in California for four years by then: somebody finally had to make a definitive statement about drive-in churches . . . that terrible, brittle teenage society, particularly around Beverly Hills.

An example of why I'm moving to London is as follows. My daughter Nina, thirteen, went to her first big dance not too long ago with a young man named Peter Douglas, with me, the nervous father, sitting up for her. At 11.30 a huge Rolls Royce pulls into the driveway—Peter Douglas' father Kirk is driving her home, kisses her a fond goodnight, and she says "Thank you" and comes into the house. And the point was that nothing about that seemed peculiar to her. It seemed perfectly normal to be driven home by Kirk Douglas in a Rolls Royce after a school dance. "It's time to get out of Hollywood," I told myself.

It's also a shocking thing for a born rebel like I am, or used to be, suddenly to discover I'm part of the establishment. I continually try to do things to counteract this. For instance, at the last Academy Awards evening, I publicly burned my Academy card in protest at the screenwriting award, but everybody thought that was funny . . . "Old George, he's a little loaded and having fun again." The problem in the society in which I move is that I don't know how certifiably insane you have to be before anyone will even notice. If I were to walk stark naked down Sunset Boulevard playing a trombone, it would hardly cause any attention. They'd say "He's just plugging a picture or something." I don't know what you can do to be put away.

The only way I can really react to this is by making fun of it. The jokes are a salvation, otherwise I *would* be insane. If you can't laugh at it . . . I've had enough psychoanalysis to be able to deal with some of the problems in my life, and my despair at society is one of them. And rather than commit suicide or write long Abby Mann pictures with tracts and speeches at the end, I've decided to be amusing about it. Or at least attempt to be.

The central sequence of THE SECRET LIFE must last about 25 minutes—a beautifully sustained two-scene from the time Anne Jackson comes to the movie star's hotel pretending to be a call girl until she leaves again. Was it shot in sequence?

I try as much as possible to shoot in continuity at all times, but usually something goes wrong. The economics run against it: you want to get one set finished and out of the way. So we really shot the end of the picture before the beginning. But the one thing I did shoot in continuity was the movie star/call girl scene. I did that in five days, very fast. Walter Matthau was impeccable, Anne Jackson was difficult to work with, though she's wonderful in the film. She was frightened—she'd never carried a picture before; she was uncomfortable working in a wig (I don't blame her), and she was technically unused to having to hit marks. When you're shooting in a very small area, the marks are critical: particularly as we were trying to make Annie—playing a married woman who is irrationally afraid that she is losing her looks—look as beautiful as possible in the picture. (Very successfully, since we had Leon Shamroy, one of the finest cameramen in the world.) In order to achieve this it was critical that she be in exactly the right position at each move, and like all stage actresses she is used to a great deal of freedom. So she got tenser and tenser.

In the scene where she blows up in the bathroom, I found myself doing something I had read about with other directors and never dreamed I would do. The bathroom was really constricting, she was missing her marks, she had big block-long speeches to read and couldn't remember her lines, and she was beginning to get actually hysterical. I suddenly decided I had no choice but to make her do it over and over again, till she actually broke down, and then I shot it. It was just great and at last she realised what we were doing. She loved it the next day when she saw the rushes. But at the time she was so mad at me that she was going to kill me as soon as we got off the set. And that was the only time I was not Charlie lovable.

In a way the sequence is rather reminiscent of the long bedroom scene in A BOUT DE SOUFFLE.

I thought about that scene a lot when I was working on it. And I was trying desperately *not* to do the same kind of thing. I am credited with the remark—and indeed I did make it—that "The only time an American male in a sex comedy wears the pants is when he's making love." So I took great care to make sure we know they were both naked in that bed, because that scene in *A Bout de Souffle* was spoiled for me by Belmondo's impeccably white shorts which kept popping through.

When Walter Matthau walks to the bed with the drinks in his hand—a very critical shot: it was essential to keep the suggestion that he was naked—Walter, being at the back of his mind still a Method actor, said, "How the hell am I going to do this scene?" I said, "Well, it's simple. There's a little seat by the bed. You just sit there, you put the drinks down,



ON THE SET OF "LORD LOVE A DUCK": LOLA ALBRIGHT, RUTH GORDON, GEORGE AXELROD.

and slide into bed, thusly." He said, "Why do I sit there?" "Are we going to start all this Method crap?" I said. "Why do you sit there? I'll tell you why you sit there. You sit down to take your slippers off." Now the fact that he wasn't wearing any slippers didn't bother him—he just said, "Aah, very good—I'll take my slippers off." So he pantomimes just off camera, removing some imaginary slippers, and then gets into bed. He was perfectly happy.

What were you trying to do with colour in THE SECRET LIFE?

I had an interesting conception for it, I thought, but because of my lack of experience it didn't quite work out. I wanted to have the entire hotel suite, that whole section, done in monotone, real monotone, and the only colour source be the Palm Springs tan of the movie star. Intellectually that's a very good conceit. However, as Anne Jackson is very pale to begin with, we had an awful body colour contrast there, so it looked like Walter was a Cherokee Indian or else Sidney Poitier, which added another development I didn't want to get into. But I firmly believe in that kind of subdued colour effect, because I think my hatred of colour originated in the early days of Technicolor, when everything was like a hand-tinted postcard. I felt that colour was one more thing that came between the audience and the story. And also I thought to myself, what are my ten favourite movies?—*La Dolce Vita*, *A Bout de Souffle*, *Citizen Kane*, *Manchurian Candidate*, *A Hard Day's Night*—and I noticed that all these films have one thing in common: they're all in black and white.

Did you have any problems working with Shamroy?

I had never worked with him, indeed had never met him. I had a cameraman I was interested in using, but 20th wanted to use Shamroy, because he was under contract. They knew, too, that I was a relatively inexperienced director, and they wanted to have their own man there. Shamroy has a great reputation in Hollywood as a tyrant. I had wanted Jimmy Wong Howe, who has an equal reputation, but he turned out suddenly to be unavailable. So I said, "All right, if Mr. Shamroy will come to my office, we'll talk for half-an-hour. Let's see whether we can talk to each other." So this formidable man, a man of 65 perhaps, with great bearing and dignity, with his rep tie and impeccable blazer, his big cigar and six Academy Awards, came in. How am I going to do this, I wondered? So I said, "Mr. Shamroy, I am told that you are an even bigger shit than my friend Jimmy Howe. Is that true?" He burst into roars of laughter, and we've been bosom friends ever since. Shammy understood the picture, too, as Danny Fapp did not understand *Lord Love a Duck*. Shamroy realised from the beginning that we were really doing a kind of hip Ibsen—we were doing *A Doll's House*.

There's another secret about this picture, which somebody

is going to discover, so I might as well admit it before I'm nailed. It's the other side of the coin of *The Seven Year Itch* . . . even to the dream sequences and the flashes. But a far more mature one. It should be, I should have learned something in fifteen years . . .

How about future projects?

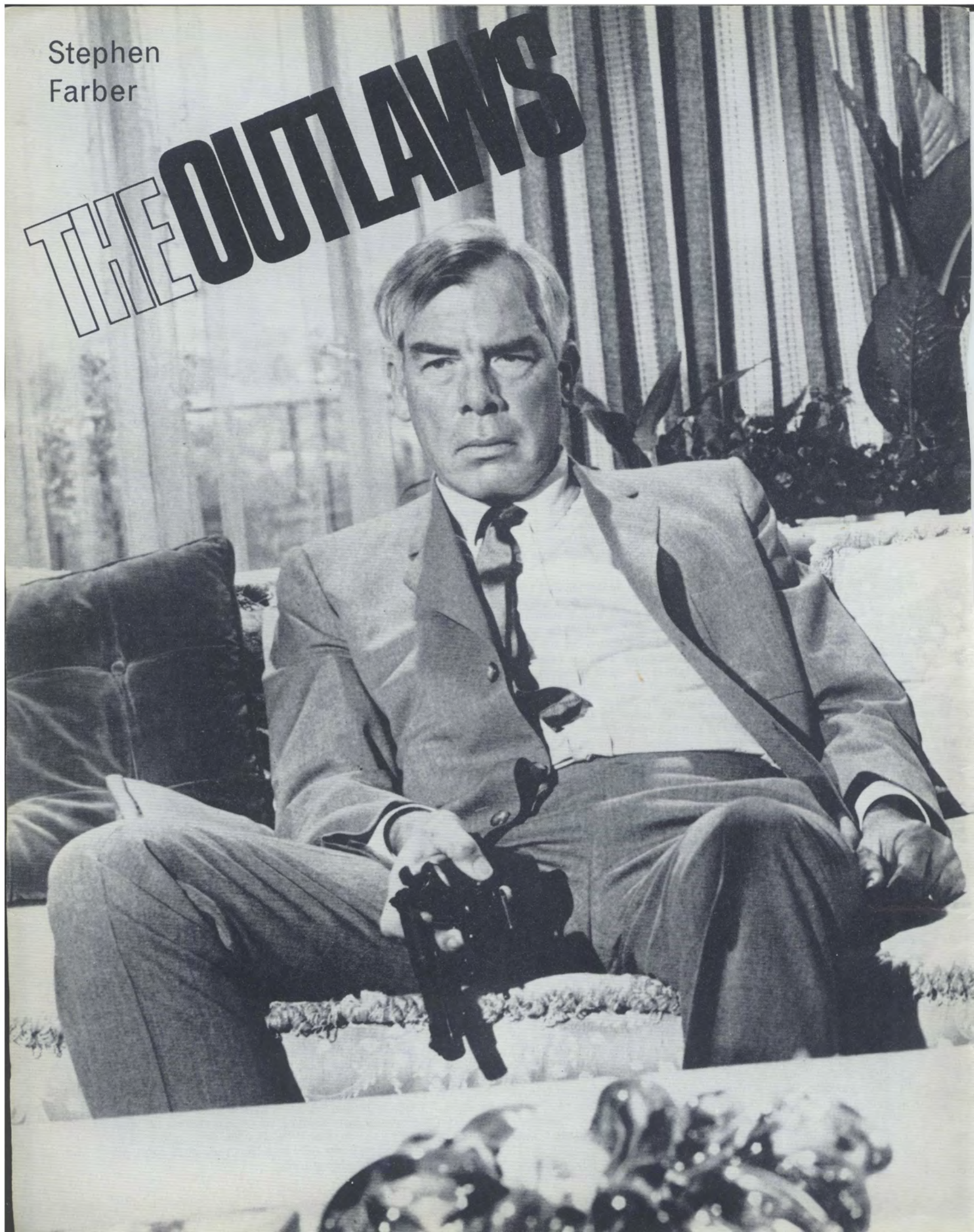
I had promised myself a long time ago that when I got to be 45 I would take a year off and really write something. Also I want to get into a city again. Los Angeles is not a city. Los Angeles is one continuous strip of suburb on the way to an airport. I've always loved London, so we thought we'd come to London for a year. I will announce to the world that I'm going to write a novel; but you know damn well it's going to end up being a screenplay. I have an idea I want to do. I'm compulsively drawn for some reason to . . . one of two themes that recur through my work. It's either domestic comedy; or it's about California and Hollywood. *Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter* was about Hollywood; *Goodbye Charlie* was about Hollywood; you could almost say *Lord Love a Duck* was about Hollywood; certainly *Paris When It Sizzles* was about Hollywood. I've got one more goddamned Hollywood story in me. These are people I know: I know their sound, their language, their grammar . . . My theory that we were talking about earlier is that the planet Earth is the lunatic asylum of the galaxy, and that Southern California is the violent ward. I think that Southern California is the United States in epitome, and the United States is the future of the world in epitome. I fear that the whole world is going to look like Southern California soon.

In spite of this, you're obviously not really tempted to cut loose from Hollywood?

I'm afraid, the umbilical cord . . . I'm not ready to sever it totally yet. Also—and I'm speaking from a vast inexperience—I don't know of a better place actually to manufacture motion pictures. Do you know the Italian Hell story? It's one of the few great trade jokes. It's about a movie producer who dies, having lived a very wicked and sinful life. Saint Peter says, "No, I can't let you in. The record's too tough—you can't beat this rap, ever. However, because you have made several very good Biblical epics, we're going to give you a little break. You can have your choice of going to Regular Hell or Italian Hell." "What's that?" he said. "Well, in Regular Hell, they nail you to a cross eight hours a day, shove hot pokers up your behind and set fire to your feet." "That does not sound good," he said. "What is Italian Hell?" "In Italian Hell, they nail you to a cross eight hours a day, shove hot pokers up your behind and set fire to your feet." "Well, what's the difference?" "In Italian Hell sometimes they lose the cross, they can't get the fire started, they have no nails . . ."

Stephen
Farber

THE OUTLAWS



IN THE EARLY SIXTIES the heroes of many of the most interesting or most successful American movies—*Psycho*, *Lolita*, *The Manchurian Candidate*, *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?*, *The Haunting*, *Lilith*—were insane. The criminal heroes of the key new movies—*The Dirty Dozen*, *Bonnie and Clyde*, *The Flim Flam Man*,* *Point Blank*, *Cool Hand Luke*, *The Incident*, *In Cold Blood*—are often close to insane too, but the emphasis has changed. Humbert Humbert and Clyde Barrow are both neurotic killers, but Humbert was a killer only incidentally, while Clyde Barrow is primarily a bank robber and killer, only incidentally neurotic. The madman and the criminal, of course, share the world beyond the fringe of normal society; they are the two most radical outcasts from respectability. But if the aim of both sets of films is to challenge socially accepted distinctions of sanity or morality and to locate value in the outsider, the new movies have a greater aggressiveness and determination in their challenge of the ordinary. Criminals to some extent consciously reject the ordinary by attacking it. Perry Smith in *In Cold Blood* knows that he is a psychopath.

Cool Hand Luke is probably the first important chain gang movie since Mervyn LeRoy's *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*, made during the Thirties, when a chain gang movie seemed an appropriate genre for social protest. And it was in the Thirties, too, that the criminals were last heroes of a major series of American films, the Cagney-Robinson-Raft gangster movies. Probably no one needs to be persuaded that there was a relationship between the social despair of the Depression and the movies' celebration of the gangster-killer. Neither, I imagine, does anyone need to be persuaded that the mood in America during the last couple of years has turned less hopeful, and the protests more violent, than at any time since the Thirties. (I understand there are even polls that 'prove' this.) So it seems fitting that the most controversial of the new outlaw films, *Bonnie and Clyde*, is set in the Thirties, in a Depression landscape.

* * *

Before looking more closely at the criminal heroes of a few of these movies, I'd like to consider the attitude toward authority that runs through all the new films. There's a chilling moment at the end of Larry Peerce's *The Incident* which curtly summarises this attitude. The film concerns a couple of hoods who terrorise the passengers in a subway car on a late night ride into New York City. One of the passengers has finally beaten the two of them down, and as the train pulls into Grand Central, another passenger calls out for help. Two policemen rush into the car, and without even hesitating, throw the one Negro passenger (who is well-dressed) up against the wall and frisk him brutally. This happens in an instant, and in the background, at one corner of the screen; what makes the audience gasp (and also laugh rather bitterly) is the casualness of the moment. The director simply assumes that police are ignorant and brutal—and is sure that we assume so too—and doesn't feel he has to belabour the point.

Police are unsympathetic in most of these movies. *Bonnie and Clyde* and *The Flim Flam Man* both stress the stupidity and vanity of police officers; the films even contain intriguingly similar scenes of policemen preening for photographers on the scene of the crime. In *The Flim Flam Man* the chief of police is morbid as well as self-indulgent—in one of the film's wittiest, sourest scenes he slavers excitedly as the confidence man's young accomplice tells him some phoney stories of their grisly murder of helpless old ladies. At the end of *Bonnie and Clyde* the police sneakily, viciously murder the buoyant young criminals: the slow motion death sequence, which everyone has praised, painfully intensifies our feelings of revulsion and hatred for the executioners.

Cool Hand Luke is notable for its total, unrelieved hostility toward the prison warden and guards. The movie has been compared more than once to *From Here to Eternity*, another study of an uneducated nonconformist in a repressive environment. But the differences are more striking than the

similarities. *From Here to Eternity*, despite its sympathy for the loner within the army, is hardly uncharitable in its treatment of military authority as a whole. When the generals learn of the way in which Prewitt has been abused by his commanding officer, they immediately discharge the tyrant. The message seems to be that although there may be nasty individuals in the army, the establishment itself is benevolent: kindly, humane generals will uncover the culprits and clean things up for the good soldiers.

Cool Hand Luke shows none of this piety. The system in the prison camp is hopelessly perverted—when Luke most needs compassion, after his mother dies, the guards lock him for days in a grim, wooden outhouse to make sure he won't try to escape for her funeral. One guard, called The Man with No Eyes because he never removes his sunglasses, works in the film as an almost archetypal, effectively sinister emblem of totally unfeeling police brutality; and the moments when, without speaking, he lifts his rifle to shoot a bird or a snake or a turtle, are terse visual confirmation of his cruelty. Even the one guard who seems at first to be more sympathetic reveals his stupidity when he turns coldly against Luke after learning that he doesn't believe in God. And there is no higher authority to whom the prisoners can appeal.

The comparisons of *Cool Hand Luke* to *From Here to Eternity* have a certain subliminal validity, because the prison in *Cool Hand Luke* looks so much like an army barracks: the sterility of the camp routines and the desperate, parasitic camaraderie of the prisoners seem pretty clear allusions to the suffocation of military life. And none of the 'prisoners' seems to have committed a very serious crime. A minor moment in *In Cold Blood*—Dick shrewdly impresses a smarmy sales clerk by lying that Perry's motorcycle accident wounds won him a bronze star in Korea—represents the casual irreverence toward army and patriotism that would not have been tolerated in an American film several years ago. The army, though in the form of a nineteenth-century cavalry, is openly and mercilessly mocked throughout *Waterhole 3*. And in *The Dirty Dozen*, admittedly a badly confused movie, Lee Marvin says that the general who planned the mission he is to head 'must be a raving lunatic'. Except for Marvin, the army officers in the film are all presented as ruthless or incompetent.

But the anti-social bias of these films is even more conclusive than this antagonism toward authority. All of the films express disillusionment with the normal life choices and life styles of American society. They do this, first, by asking us to observe how little difference there is between the criminals and the respectable. The flim flam man has long ago observed that all people are petty and greedy and dishonest—the respectable folk we see are hysterically protective of their cars, anxious to cheat whenever they can—and he proceeds to teach the lesson to the young army deserter who temporarily joins up with him. The subway passengers in *The Incident* are, with a couple of exceptions, concerned about nothing besides money, status, securing or maintaining well-regarded careers. We feel they almost deserve to be tormented by the two hoods whose brutality and selfishness caricature the meanness of their own lives. All of the characters in *Waterhole 3*, sheriff, thieves, innocent shoemaker alike, hunger after gold. And the robber-killer is the most sympathetic character in the film because, like the flim flam man, he's perfectly honest about his criminal desires instead of hiding them behind a badge or a uniform. One of the reasons for the resurgence of the criminal hero is this observation that in a world totally depraved anyway, only the criminal's frankness and vitality retain appeal and value.

* * *

This is nowhere clearer than in John Boorman's *Point Blank*, which celebrates its criminal hero as the only live wire in an inert mechanical universe. The American reviews have given the film short shrift, admitting its visual authority but complaining of its banality and violence. Probably even now most people don't know that *Point Blank*, though uneven, unclear in intention, sometimes superficial and lurid, is also, at moments, the most imaginative, startling, exciting American film of the year—perhaps of the last few years. The basic

*Shown in Britain as *One Born Every Minute*.

story—a man agrees to help a friend in a robbery, then is shot and left for dead by the friend and his own wife, and, after recuperation, sets out to kill the friend and recover his share of the loot—would look creaky on television. But it has been dressed up in considerable cinematic elegance, and the plot line has also been intriguingly blurred, so that we're deliberately confused about some of the key episodes. The robbery, for example, takes place during some mysterious exchange of funds (never explained) on a deserted Alcatraz. And the man needs the money to pay his debts to an undefined Organisation (like the criminal organisation in Arthur Penn's *Mickey One*), some sort of crime syndicate obviously, though what they're involved in exactly, or what kind of front they're using remains cryptic. To somebody who doesn't respond to *Point Blank* this obscurity will seem only maddeningly pretentious, but I think Boorman and his writer Alexander Jacobs were trying to work some interesting variations on straightforward gangster material.

For instance, none of the hostile reviews has paid much attention to the strange, apparently incongruous touches with which *Point Blank* is filled. Just as we've accepted the film as a typical, if visually alluring and confusing revenge-and-sadism story, there's a scene that jars us by asking for rather different responses. The hero, Walker, is trying to find Mal, his betrayer, and has been led to a car lot whose owner may have a lead for him. And the film suddenly turns bizarrely comic. The car lot is plastered with freakish, ridiculously oversized billboards; as Walker approaches, we overhear the conversation of an unctuous salesman and a platinum blonde customer. (He: "I know the poodle's name is Lola, but what's your name?" She: "I love to go to the beach.") At that moment Big John, the owner, sidles up to the girl and flirts a little before coming over to Walker and beginning his best factory-polished hardsell. Walker is pretending to be a prospective buyer, and they get into a new convertible for a spin. Big John wants to listen to his own commercial on the radio, but Walker wants information, and to get it, he keeps smashing the car against the poles beneath the Los Angeles freeway, remaining utterly cool himself (Lee Marvin's casual brutality can be 'done' for comic or shock effect—here it's quite amusing), until he has frightened Big John into talking. Finally satisfied, he leaves Big John bloody and panting in the wreck as his oily commercial twirps from the radio, the only part of the car that is still working. It's a very funny sequence, from the first shot of the car lot, but people seem to be bewildered until the last few moments, when they can't help laughing openly. We aren't used to seeing satire and brutality linked so outrageously in a movie (though they were linked in *The Manchurian Candidate*).

The movie as a whole provides brilliant juxtapositions of the rapid surfaces of our computerised world with outbursts of savage violence and weird hints of omnipresent evil. Some examples: Mal walks into a large, antiseptic office and stops to talk to a secretary, who has typewriter, dictaphone, all the standard apparatus in front of her. Behind her several women are chatting amiably by the coffee machine. Mal is ushered into an inner office, but there the routine is jolted—he's searched for a gun. Yet, in the background, our eye catches on the wall several little coloured slides of an industrial product; the contrast between the slickly mechanical and the potentially violent is arresting. Later in the film, Walker is to pick up his money at a storm drain near one of the freeways. He suspects a trap and forces one of the Organisation chairmen to walk out for the money, where he is immediately killed by a marksman concealed far away. The setting is a vast, interminable terrain of concrete hills and bridges, a stream of water running through the centre; through Boorman's camera it's a conclusive, powerful image of the gleaming sterility and senselessness of the city. Everything's been so neatly manufactured—everything is so *clean*—that it seems the last place likely to be disturbed by violence; yet when two men are murdered there, we feel it's somehow apt. The place has no conceivable purpose but death. At the end of the sequence there's a superb black comic moment. Walker goes out to retrieve the package of money, but on breaking it open

finds, as he expected, only paper. Desperately, he takes a billfold from the dead chairman's pocket, but there are only credit cards inside, and he leaves the string of them spread out over the man's body, a grisly, funny summary of his corporation life.

Point Blank's juxtaposition of violence and satiric detail—its insistence that we laugh and shudder *simultaneously*—is not really such a strange way of looking at our cities. We're all aware of the astonishing contrasts—plush luxury apartments, shiny modern office buildings and car lots, and frightening, reckless violence and corruption—presented by the film. And I suppose the film could be interpreted literally: one might say that it verifies our suspicion that the most successful businessmen are often, in secret, quite ruthless and vicious, and that respectable industries sometimes cover for Mafia-like operations. But *Point Blank* is not a realistic social document; it's a fascinating film because it confirms some of our deepest, least articulate intuitions in the language of a witty, sadistic, hallucinatory pop painting—Dick Tracy in Eliot's Unreal City. (Boorman is British, and perhaps it takes an outsider to see the American city so freshly: the movie's treatment of Los Angeles is certainly the most interesting visual description of that city anyone has provided.)

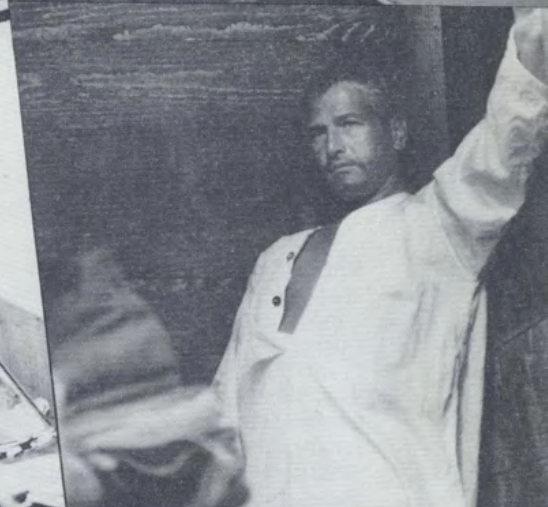
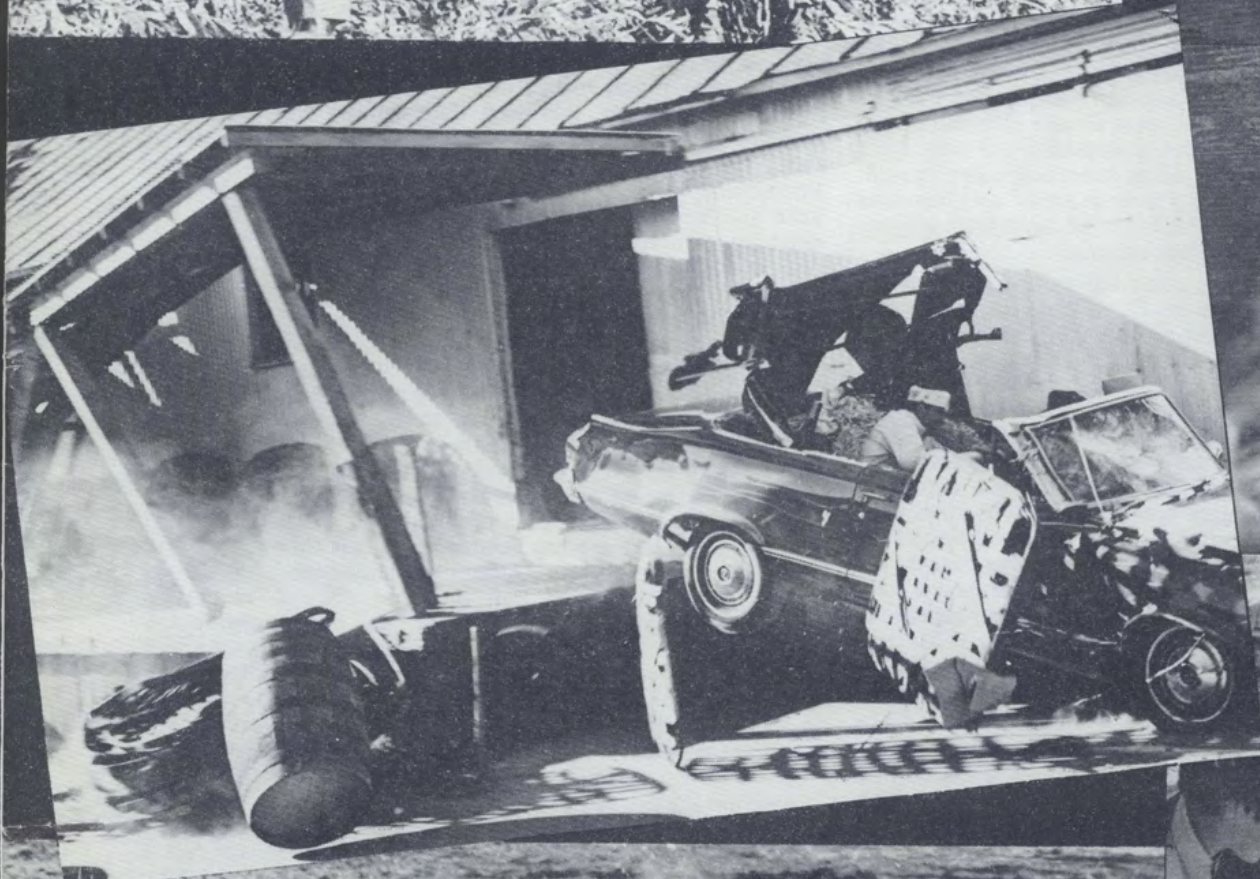
As Walker lies half dead in a cell on a dark, uninhabited Alcatraz at the very beginning, he wonders if his betrayal has been a dream, and the movie as a whole is a kind of anguished dream of a man who's woken up one morning in a familiar city that somehow, for the first time, looks alien and threatening. An unending airport corridor, a discotheque of psychedelic montages and music that sounds like shrieks (so much so that when a girl discovers some beaten bodies and really does scream, no one notices her), a push-button office that contains almost nothing but aluminium window blinds, a modern ranch house filled with electrical appliances gone suddenly berserk—these are striking images of the commonest sights in our world twisted just slightly, so that they look oppressive. Everything we see in the film is either a gigantic tomb or a frenzied, mechanical dance of death. Only in the past, summarised for us in one lovely, indelible flashback of Walker and his wife walking and laughing in a misty rain, did Walker's life look any different; but now that seems as if it happened on another planet, in another existence.

Point Blank isn't a psychologically realistic film—there aren't clear or understandable motivations for anything—but that doesn't make it an empty film. The film is expressionistic, a portrait of a nightmare landscape that explains nothing literal about the complexity of people's inner lives, and a great deal, perhaps, about the perceptions that can drive a person mad—the devastating impact of really *seeing*. Because this is an American film, and because it's a variation on a gangster film, people aren't willing to think about it as they think about a movie like *Blow-Up*, which seems to me quite comparable—just as empty as a psychological study, understandable and satisfying only as an attempt to stylise and visualise the chaos of our times. *Blow-Up* shows us things that we already understand: the crazed rock and roll concert, the uncommunicative pot party, the degenerate photographer's studio. We know how we're supposed to evaluate these things, and Antonioni hasn't done much to complicate the standard cultural weariness response. But we haven't seen the bizarre juxtapositions of plastic and brutality that make *Point Blank* at times an electrifying, new experience. *Blow-Up* confirms what we already know, *Point Blank* changes us a little.

* * *

A few words about Boorman's artful use of violence. The violence all through the film is extremely sensuous. And I'm not talking just about the actual shootings and beatings (of which there are less in the movie than you'd think). What's persistently brutal about the film is the fierceness of Lee Marvin's every twitch, the passionate movement of his body when he fires the gun, even when he's firing at an empty bed or a telephone. The violence is overtly sexual at a couple of

STILLS FROM: "COOL HAND LUKE" (PAUL NEWMAN), "BONNIE AND CLYDE" (FAYE DUNAWAY, WARREN BEATTY), CAR SMASH FROM "THE FLIM FLAM MAN", RUBBISH DUMP SCAVENGERS FROM "IN COLD BLOOD".



points—once when Walker rubs up against the Organisation's secretary, seeming to kiss her, but actually pressing a gun against her; again, in a curious homosexual touch, Walker pulls Mal, completely naked, out of bed, lunging on top of him in a kind of violent embrace, while Mal pleads seductively, "Kill me, kill me." The film is even violent in its editing: the establishing shots that we've come to expect in Hollywood movies are almost all omitted, and we're constantly being thrust into a scene before we have our bearings, forced to catch up with what's going on. The very rhythm of the film is that of an assault. Violence is presented so luxuriously because it's the only stance that has any meaning in Walker's world. At least violence, as Walker practises it, is alive and personal—even when he's threatening to kill someone, he wants to be close to him, unlike the Organisation marksmen who shoot men they can barely see. The Organisation men hide their violence and greed beneath the protective cover of business conferences and office memoranda, but Walker, essentially a 1930 gangster lost in a 1960 setting, insists on bringing his violence out into the open; he doesn't stifle his animal vitality in Ivy League courtesies that mean to turn even crime into a 9 to 5 routine. For him, at least, violence remains animated.

Liberals don't want to admit that violence can ever have value, but one reason these movies are exciting is that they disturb us, by undercutting those liberal pieties. In three of the new movies the best scenes are outrageous, full-scale, almost surreal destruction sequences. I've already described one of them, the wreck of the fancy convertible in *Point Blank*. In *The Flim Flam Man* Mordecai and Curley are riding through a backwoods Kentucky town in another new, stolen car; as they roar away from the police, they smash into buildings, monuments, gas stations, eventually wrecking not only their car and several others, but practically the whole town as well. And in the middle of *Waterhole 3* there is a wild and hilarious sequence that applauds the annihilation of the town's elegant Victorian bordello in a lively shoot-em-out.

Violence has always been presented as openly attractive in comedy, but these sequences in *The Flim Flam Man* and *Waterhole 3* are more than just funny: they have a piercing, almost painfully unrelieved intensity about them that distinguishes them from routine scenes in other comedies. The point of the scenes, as always, is the overthrow of the reputable. The whorehouse in *Waterhole 3* is the most lavishly decorated establishment in its ugly Western town, and the gunfighters relish smashing ornate doors, windows, and the expensive little figurines—"a vase brought round the Horn!"—that belie the earthy realities of the house. During the destruction of the town in *The Flim Flam Man*, the camera happily observes the demolition of an 'Uncle Sam Wants You' poster and a ceremonial cannon that stands proudly on courthouse square. In other words, details in these sequences, along with their general subversive energy, convey a violent antagonism toward authority, respectability, all gilt-edged, sanctimonious poses, and speak for a cheerful, spirited sort of anarchic brutality.

These films aren't, of course, made by protestors or for them, and I don't want to make them sound like self-conscious revolutionary manifestos; whatever revolutionary qualities they have are intuitive, indirect reflections of dissatisfactions only barely understood by audiences and film-makers. And I don't want to pretend that these movies are the only popular ones in America. On the same corner in Los Angeles where *In Cold Blood* was breaking theatre attendance records last winter and spring, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* was breaking records too, with even bigger crowds. The American public has always bought astonishingly different entertainments at the same instant. And perhaps audiences always respond enthusiastically to violence and crime—certainly our knowledge of psychology tells us so—but even a few years ago aggressive fantasies had to be disguised, washed with moral piety; the heroes of violent movies were the detectives, the secret agents, the unjustly accused. If moviemakers and audiences no longer need the disguises, that may be partly the result of a new urgency in the popular temper, as well as of a healthful new candidness in the American film.

Of course the compromises and cover-ups still are there in

some of these movies; for some of the film-makers the hostilities they want to deal with are too radical and volatile to be presented straight. This is clearest in *The Dirty Dozen*, the most importantly confused movie of 1967 (also the year's biggest money-maker), which begins by asking us to identify with irreverent murderers and thieves who hate the army, and ends by asking us to applaud their reformation into frighteningly brave and efficient soldiers, who willingly and eagerly obey the army's orders (though even the ending is tinged with some uneasy strokes of irony). The movie only plays on the antisocial feelings that the film's director, Robert Aldrich, shrewdly recognised as contemporary. It finally, very moralistically, soothes the audience by saying, "Well, all of that irreverence was just fun, but we can be solemn and patriotic too, and look how nobly these men die for their country." The audience must be confused by the film's wavering between aggressive anti-authoritarianism and sugary, conformist platitudes about Men in War. But they're probably used to American movies that are confused in this way, and they may even like the confusion because it lets them have a good time without forcing them really to challenge the norms of their society that they're still, after all, committed to.

* * *

There's no such cop-out in *Bonnie and Clyde*. A lot of the favourable reviews of the movie have been phoney, because they wanted to answer Bosley Crowther's charge that the film romanticised the young criminals. So they have tried to say that the movie is not a celebration of gangsters or violence, that it is very moral really; even Warren Beatty, speaking as the film's producer, has said that Bonnie and Clyde are actually very sick. This is not entirely untrue, but it's camouflage. The movie isn't moral in any conventional sense, and Bonnie and Clyde are very attractive. That's the first thing we have to admit about the film, or we distort it badly. Even the defenders of *Bonnie and Clyde* have too often forced themselves into an unpleasant moralistic stance.

For whatever the limitations of seeing Bonnie and Clyde as heroes, the film, like *Point Blank*, provides no meaningful alternative to their inchoate, rather bumbling rebellion. They have impulse and vitality; they only want to be out of the ordinary, and when we see what the ordinary looks like, we have to appreciate their desire to escape. Arthur Penn's series of Depression tableaux are beautiful in a bleak, horrifying sort of way. The decaying towns, crumbling, boarded-up homes, a group of dispossessed families huddled together in a swamp—these glimpses of smalltown, rural America at its most hopeless are what Bonnie and Clyde turn away from. They travel across an American landscape that looks thoroughly gutted, and that they can manage, at certain moments, to maintain feelings of hope and even exuberance is remarkable, moving, beautiful. Why is it so wicked to present criminals sympathetically, unless you're committed to a milky liberal doctrine of social responsibility that has nothing to do with art? The film's celebration of the criminal is carefully considered, passionate, and seriously explored—all that we have a right to ask.

Pauline Kael was quite right to contrast *Bonnie and Clyde* with the Thirties version of the same story, Lang's *You Only Live Once*, to show that the current film no longer has a shrill, clear-cut social message. In the Thirties, after the New Deal anyway, the mood was optimistic in spite of widespread misery; everyone thought there were easy explanations and easy solutions. Even tragic stories were rather hopeful in lamenting the one identifiable, avoidable social mistake that doomed their heroes. David Newman and Robert Benton's script for *Bonnie and Clyde* expresses the mood of the Sixties: a desperate environment, with no suggestions of what causes or cures might be. No one is blamed for poverty or crime, and there is no neat, geometric relationship between the two. But there is a feeling in the film, rendered by Arthur Penn's evocative use of the settings and faces of poverty, of inarticulate, profound social dissatisfaction that does link the poor and the criminal in a dimly understood sense of a common plight. Bonnie and Clyde are not victims of Society as Thirties heroes were—they're not forced into crime by cruel officials who

won't understand them and let them love. But they're victims of their society in a very different sense—they're led to crime because what's respectable and normal in their society is all so withering, so empty, so dull. Their surroundings are so bleak, contain so few possibilities, that extreme actions alone are meaningful.

And *Bonnie and Clyde* is popular with the young because it concerns young people with no future, who don't care about the future, who live for Now because youth is everything and there is nothing in the world to get older for. And if this ravenous hunger for life and excitement is what dooms them, well, that's attractive to young people too. The vision of youth consuming itself so quickly is a romantically self-pitying one, and I suspect we want to identify with Bonnie and Clyde as much in their untimely death as in their life. But the last part of the movie is upsetting; the deaths of Clyde's brother and of Bonnie and Clyde themselves aren't pretty. We may think we want to see them cut off while they are still young, before they have to compromise, but it's hideous when it happens. The sensation of the tremendous energy and yet the tremendous wastefulness of their violent, headlong rush at life matches youth's fantasies today, but *Bonnie and Clyde* criticises that fantasy even while celebrating it. The film makes us see the horror in the dream of dramatically burned-out youth, it scares us for wanting to be like Bonnie and Clyde.

The movie may sympathise with violent people, but it does not, finally, glorify violence. For one thing, though they take violence lightly, Bonnie and Clyde aren't aggressively violent. They kill only in self-defence, and they aren't in the least sadistic. (It's interesting that although Bonnie and Clyde kill a lot of people, and Walker in *Point Blank* doesn't actually kill anybody, Walker is the one who gives the impression of being a killer.) More important, the toll of their violence is on themselves. The sequence in which Clyde's brother Buck is killed by police bullets is the most powerful, excruciating film sequence I can remember seeing. The editing is superb, and the hysterical sense Penn gives of everyone talking separately but at once, is one of the finest achievements in overlapping dialogue since Orson Welles. We've enjoyed the violence in the early parts of the film, but in this sequence we're forced to pay for that enjoyment. We aren't allowed any 'tasteful' escape hatch from the intensity of their suffering; still, it's not gratuitously gruesome. When Buck, his head shot in, says to Clyde, "Clyde, I lost my shoes, I think the dog took 'em," it is a more searing, overpowering revelation of the horror of his death than any amount of bloody flesh could be.

After this sequence we can't simply identify with Bonnie and Clyde, we have to distance ourselves from the violent life they've chosen. But we distance ourselves not because of any discomfort over what they're doing to society, only because of the terrifying things they're doing to themselves. If banks and police suffer for their crimes, we certainly aren't allowed to feel concern about that. Even when *Bonnie and Clyde* is most devastating, most sceptical about the life of its hero and heroine, we always feel it's an antisocial film. We sympathise only with them, always with them.

* * *

In Cold Blood would not belong in this survey if it were only a replica of Truman Capote's 1966 best-seller. But Richard Brooks' film is not an exact replica, it provides a very different experience, and the differences are revealing. The book, though consistently fascinating and provocative, was marred, it seemed to me, by its objectivity—Capote's dogged, almost perverse refusal to admit any personal involvement in what he was describing; it had no passion and no point of view. Brooks' film does have a point of view, and thus, although most of it may be factual, it unfolds like a good drama, not like documentary reconstruction. It has lost some of the compelling detail, but it has a menacing atmosphere which the book did not have. Brooks unifies it with a mood of social desperation that distinguishes it from its source while linking it interestingly to the other current films.

Brooks even includes some bits of over-explicit dialogue to make his attitude clear—Dick telling Perry that there are different laws for rich and poor and that only the poor are



LEE MARVIN IN "POINT BLANK".

executed, a detective interrupting his questioning of Dick to ask, with barely disguised revulsion, "Why do all of you people get tattooed?" That question is one of the best lines in the film, but when Dick angrily answers him, he's a little too articulate about the hypocrisy of the respectable people and their contempt for poverty. The film's imagery is more powerful than any such speeches in defining the deprivation in the killers' world. The very first images set the killers for us as outsiders—Dick helping his father out of a wooden outhouse on a lonely Kansas plain, Perry uneasy in the crowded Kansas City bus terminal, frightened away from a telephone twice, by a group of nuns and a soldier. This kind of precise observation is sustained. Throughout the film Conrad Hall's rich, controlled black and white photography perfectly captures the ravaged look of Midwestern and Southwestern America. *In Cold Blood* complements *Bonnie and Clyde* by reminding us that the poor rural America of the Depression still exists. The desolate Kansas farmlands, bleak small towns that are little more than railroad crossings, rundown hotels, truck stop cafés specialising in Mexican food, exemplify life that is as withered today as during the Thirties.

There is one marvellous, unforgettable vignette in the film that deserves more comment. After hitch-hiking across much of America, Perry and Dick have stolen a car and are driving west from Kansas City to Las Vegas. On the desert they stop to pick up a young boy and his grandfather, who have been surviving by collecting empty coke bottles from the side of the road and cashing them in for refunds. Dick and Perry join their scavenging for a while, and the scenes of their scurrying around the desert collecting the empty bottles from trash cans and abandoned picnic areas forcefully summarise the pathos of the poor in the American landscape at its ugliest and most obscene. I especially remember a brief shot of the old grandfather, toothless, distracted, very close to death, lying in the back of the car on top of hundreds of bottles, an emblem of an entire life of inescapable misery and coarseness. Yet this sequence is one of the most tender in the film too—the warmth struck up almost immediately between the killers and the boy is affecting, an intuitive community of the deprived.

Mocking the bleached, cruel America that the killers have known is the America of the Clutters, wealthy, religious, contented. Brooks provides only mercilessly clipped images of the Clutter family, almost snapshots from a family album, set, probably ironically, to sentimental music that intensifies the

feeling of complacency. One of the important differences from the book is that in the film the Clutters are little more than cartoons (though sharp ones—the faces of Mr. Clutter and his son, especially, are exactly right). We know almost nothing about them. Some of the reviewers have objected to this, but Brooks didn't want to make the Clutters three-dimensional. We see them as the killers see them—simply as iconic representatives of a life utterly different from their own. The film is not an equally-balanced portrait of respectable and underworld America: it is *all* underworld, all from the perspective of the outlaws, and the brief alternative glimpses are only meant to tease us by their incongruity.

It's this reluctance to share the forlornness of the killers' world that people have really been objecting to. Richard Schickel admitted this when he criticised the film for *Life*: "In the book the victims, the residents of Holcomb, the detectives, the strangers whom the murderers met on their long flight all formed a collective antagonist who balanced the killers psychologically and whose ultimate triumph over them . . . granted the reader a sense of release, even triumph . . ." It's exactly that sense of consolation that Brooks denies us by refusing to allow us to feel close to anyone but the killers. Capote even ended his book with a graveyard encounter between Inspector Dewey and a friend of Nancy Clutter's, intent on providing Hollywood-style solace; Brooks ends his Hollywood film grimly, with the hanging of Perry Smith.

Although the movie attempts psychological explanations for the murders, these are either oversimplified—Perry's love-hate relationship with his father—or not quite fully developed enough—the repressed homosexuality and rivalry in the tortured relationship of Dick and Perry. We're interested enough to wish we knew more; but the explanation that works most coherently in the film is a social one. It's interesting that *In Cold Blood* and *Bonnie and Clyde* both fail in their attempts at psychoanalysis (Clyde's impotence seems only a gimmick in Penn's film), succeed best as sophisticated, complex social commentary. And the sociology in *In Cold Blood* is like that in *Bonnie and Clyde*—far more equivocal than the neat kind of definition we would have had in a Thirties movie. The mood of the film, like the mood of most of these films, is despairing; its vision is of ineradicable blemishes in an America hopelessly devastated.

* * *

Almost everything that we know and see of the killers' present and past lives is sordid. Yet they have been nourished on the same air as the Clutters. One of the most interesting things about *In Cold Blood* is that it records a rural crime. It can be contrasted to *The Incident*, which seems to blame urban conditions for crime: the hoods appear to have grown out of the subways, and the passenger who finally subdues them is the one smalltown boy in the car. The film insists on the moral superiority of the countryside. *In Cold Blood* explodes that fantasy. Its killers, as well as its victims, are country boys; what's frightening about the crime is that it can't be explained away as a result of industrialisation or mechanisation. By choosing to write about a rural crime, Capote must have wanted to get at matters most fundamental to the American experience—most deeply-rooted, most inescapable. I have said that the film complements *Bonnie and Clyde* by bringing the Depression tableaux up to date; it also complements *Point Blank*, extending the American landscape of death beyond the city, to what Fitzgerald called "the dark fields of the republic [that] roll on under the night."

The killers have grown up with the same frontiersman's dream of wealth and success that the Clutters have realised. Perry still dreams of buried treasure in Yucatan just as Dick dreams of sharing in the wealth of wheat, oil, and gas—"the perfect score". And if both dreams seem ridiculous and anachronistic, that's part of the film's criticism of the American myth of endless opportunity—a myth that contrasts stinging with the actual barrenness of the American landscape they have known all their lives. In one lyrical flashback sequence, of Perry watching his Cherokee mother, a rodeo rider, rope a calf, we can see, for a moment, all that tantalised Perry: the beauty of frontier poverty, open spaces, homeless-

ness, and their promise of boundless freedom and mobility. And so he went to Alaska with his father, the Lone Wolf prospector, to strike it rich, and they opened a hotel, and waited and waited until they realised no one would ever come. The world has changed, but the killers don't know it; Farmer Clutter keeps no safe, no cash, pays everything by cheque. But by the time Dick and Perry are rummaging for empty coke bottles on the desert, Perry anyway has learned where he is; at the thought of a three cent refund per bottle, he laughs bitterly but heartily, "So this is the sunken treasure of Captain Cortez."

Perry Smith, like Bonnie and Clyde, is essentially innocent, good, *hopeful*—in impossible ways that can only lead to anguish, and eventually violence. He is the innocent American finally forced to admit that his dreams and his treasure maps can end in nothing but death. His crime (and it is he who commits the murders) is a consequence, though he doesn't quite understand it consciously, of his recognition of everything that separates him from the Clutters in a land that boasted equal opportunities for all. His murders are a grisly conclusion to the pioneer dream: they seem, almost, a requiem for America.

Something needs to be said about the final sequence of the film, the hangings of the killers. Most people have regarded this sequence merely as a shrill and heavy-handed attack on capital punishment. The ending certainly is anti-capital punishment, but it has a dramatic inevitability that no tract could have. We feel that their society has rejected Perry and Dick all of their lives, was responsible for the agonised feelings of frustration that made them killers, and now, with unbearable scorn, the State goes one step further and takes their lives. It's worth mentioning that the hanging sequence is much more frightful and revolting than the murder sequence, which is handled with relative restraint and indirection. The hangings are filmed with much more intensity, merciless lingering over every detail—the clicks of the gallows as the minister reads of green pastures, the trembling of Perry's hands, the movement of his mouth as he chews his gum even under the black hood.

Yet the murder sequence is chilling too. Unlike *Bonnie and Clyde*, where only once, for a moment—when Clyde shoots a pursuer in the face—do we feel any horror for what the heroes do to others, *In Cold Blood* forces us to ponder a horrifying act, and still retains sympathy for the killers. Even though what the killers have done is intolerable, we feel, by the end, such disgust at what is being done *to* them, that we are enraged at the entire social rationale for their condemnation. Given all that Perry Smith has suffered, and his stumbling movement toward self-knowledge, he deserves help and freedom, not revenge of any kind; he deserves a chance to live. Brooks will not let us forget that he cut Herb Clutter's throat, for no reason, and still there is a moment, I think, when we don't want to see him suffer *anything* more, any kind of punishment at all, and that moment is a piercing one, a moment when we separate ourselves painfully, almost against our will, from the agencies of social morality, when we know that we are with the outlaw even when he is a psychopathic killer.

* * *

It's not a moment or a feeling that can possibly last, but *In Cold Blood* forces us to it, without glorification or falsification of the killer, and thus goes further than any of these films in its rejection of the norms of American society. There have been a lot of technical criticisms of the film—most of them valid—but they are niggling because, in the last analysis, the film does what only a few films do—it shakes us up a little. Some of it is clumsily done, but its insistence that we sympathise with someone who also appals us is truly unsettling. And the last moments of the film are hard to forget. Is it coincidence that in both *In Cold Blood* and *Bonnie and Clyde*, the two strongest and most searching American films of the year, the most forceful, indelible images are images of death—the death of guilty people, killers, murdered remorselessly by the society they have wronged—that leave us numb with grief and outrage? Where, if anywhere, can we go from here?



JIRI MENZEL'S "INDIAN SUMMER".

Festivals 68

BERLIN

THE SPECTRE OF REVOLUTION haunted Berlin this year. After the Cannes debacle, the Pesaro incident and the Venice Biennale disaster, it was confidently expected that on the third day the ghost would rise again and we would all be packing our bags and chalking up yet another of the year's festivals as a victim of political upheaval. In the event the ghost turned out to be a will-o'-the-wisp, and the nearest Berlin got to revolution was a few eggs thrown at a leading German film critic and a minor rumpus over the city's Film and Television Academy. The authorities came prepared (marked tickets for the opening night ceremony), and in the face of that, and extra powers given to the police by the recently enacted emergency laws, the best the dissidents could manage was a permanent open discussion—conspicuous only for its impermanence—and a brave attempt by Werner Herzog, director of the official German entry, to set up free screenings of Festival films at a cinema in the suburbs. Would-be disrupters might, in fact, have remembered *La Chinoise*: "Il faut confronter les idées vagues avec des images claires." But it was not to be, and the old ladies in their Thirties hats left the screaming weekend traffic on the Kurfürstendamm for the cold comfort of another *Weekend*.

As at Cannes, though, the talking-point of the Festival was not the films but the festival idea itself. This is not the place for arguing the pros and cons, but for what it's worth it seems to me that the major festivals, as now constituted, have outgrown their usefulness. The uneasy marriage between commercial junketing and what the festival organisers hope is the cinema's current top twenty was thrown into sharp focus at Berlin. Perhaps it's time for a divorce—or at

Berlin

Karlovy Vary

Pesaro

Venice

least a clear dividing line between the market place and the critical forum.

Meanwhile 'Berlin bleibt doch Berlin', as the neon sign opposite the Europa Centre defiantly puts it. There was the usual quota of dead wood, but on the whole this year was marginally better than last. *Weekend* and Jean-Marie Straub's *Chronik der Anna Magdalena Bach*, both reviewed in the Summer issue of *SIGHT AND SOUND*, produced the loudest reactions. Of Godard's epitaph to the bourgeoisie I will only say that after two viewings I find it the apotheosis of nihilism (and I won't be fobbed off with the woolly rejoinder that Godard offers no solutions because there are none: if there aren't, then 'fin du cinéma' is an appalling understatement). Straub's essay in minimal cinema is more directly a matter of

taste (as someone said, "If this is pure cinema, then Bresson is Cinerama"). But if one accepts the film's fairly obvious proposition that the subject is not the man but the music, the very reduction of the visuals does convey a fascinating reflective approximation to the essence of music: a fusion of one language expressed in another.

Further evidence of a German renaissance came in *Lebenszeichen*, a first film by Werner Herzog remarkable for the confidence with which its director treads the tightrope between allegory and realism. The allegory is the Titan-like revolt of one man against the world, a German soldier assigned to guard an ammunition depot in a crumbling Venetian fortress on a Greek island towards the end of the war. Paralysed by the enervating monotony of this existence (the film makes no mention of the war), he suddenly runs amok, threatening to blow up the fortress and in one last gesture of defiance bombarding the town with fireworks. Herzog adroitly catalogues the signposts on the soldier's road to madness. The images are at once elliptical and starkly explicit: the white walls of the fortress in the shimmering heat of the Mediterranean sun, a complicated apparatus for trapping cockroaches, the soldier despairingly shaking his rifle at a valley of a thousand windmills. The film is pared down, with a minimum of camera movement, long passages without dialogue, and very little interaction between the characters; but this very austerity gives it the same sense of complete dislocation that one found in Jancso's *My Way Home*.

Intensity is the keynote of Herzog's film, as it is of Jan Troell's *Ole Dole Doff*, a painstakingly sincere account of a schoolteacher's struggle to hang on to his ideals and his sanity in the face of an alarmingly hostile class. Within its own limitations, this is an accomplished, sustained piece of filmmaking, and it has the considerable merit of a brilliantly tortured performance by Per Oscarsson, compulsively flicking his tongue round his mouth and suddenly unleashing all his pent-up frustration in an eruption of temper. Take away Oscarsson's performance, though, and we are left less with a film than a social document—committed, uncompromising, but hardly original. A little unfair, perhaps, since there are moments when Troell reveals an eye for telling detail, particularly in the final unnerving confrontation between teacher and children and in an oddly affecting scene when the teacher comes across an old friend photographing a fashion model in the incongruous setting of a dockyard in winter.

Troell's film, rather predictably, won the Golden Bear, which many thought should have gone to Chabrol's *Les Biches*. After his years in the wilderness with Marie Chantal and *The Tiger*, Chabrol is here firmly back in the territory of *Les Cousins* and *L'Oeil du Malin* with a splendidly ornate, Stendhalian tale about a rich and beautiful woman called Frédérique who picks up a pavement artist called Why

(because, says Chabrol, the film is a series of questions), takes her to Saint Tropez for a brief affair, and then ditches her for an architect in whom Why has shown more than a passing interest. Chabrol manipulates (that is the only word) this triangular relationship with characteristic technical bravado, his only concession to the grotesque—and the film's only major weakness—being a pair of idiot painters whose banishment by Frédérique from her house one greets with relief. But Jean Rabier's superb photography of Saint Tropez out of season and effortless performances from Stéphane Audran and Jean-Louis Trintignant more than save the day; and the finale is pure Hitchcock, transference and all.

Chabrol's bogus artists are called Robègue and Riass, which may or may not be his comment on Alain Robbe-Grillet. In any event, *L'Homme qui Ment* will be grist to the mill of those to whom Robbe-Grillet is a cinematic charlatan. As in *Trans-Europ Express*, the convoluted narrative is made up of a series of contradictions, here personified in Jean-Louis Trintignant as a man who turns up in a Balkan village and proceeds to tell everyone he meets the story of how he was or was not involved in the betrayal of a partisan who may or may not be dead. The result is a Chinese box of a film, irritating or intriguing according to taste. There's a kind of lunatic fascination in watching how one story is contradicted by the next, but on a single viewing it's difficult to decide just how seriously Robbe-Grillet takes himself—or his audience.

The Yugoslav *Innocence Unprotected* (the new edition of a good old movie, prepared, ornamented and annotated by Dusan Makavejev) was a disappointment after *Switchboard Operator*, confirming an impression that there is a little too much of the circus ringmaster about Makavejev. Here he has decked out an absurdly tinted print of the first Serbian sound film, a grotesque melodrama made by and featuring an acrobat (who does things like biting through chains and riding a bicycle across a high wire), with a scrappy miscellany of newsreel snippets and views of the acrobat and his actors as they are today. At the end of the film the acrobat himself, now almost sixty, tripped on to the stage in his trunks for a spot of muscle-flexing. It was somehow appropriate.

Elsewhere, there was little of interest, though as always at Berlin one could turn to the Retrospective (W. C. Fields and Lubitsch's American films) for relief. The 'British' *Gates to Paradise*, about the Children's Crusade, was a disaster; hard to credit that it was really made by Wajda. The Japanese offered Susumi Hani's *Nanami*, a weird and unattractive blend of youthful innocence and sado-masochistic fantasy. Italy had three films, all of them mediocre—though Carlo Lizzani's *Banditi a Milano*, about gangster terrorism in Milan and structurally very similar to Corman's *St. Valentine's Day Massacre*, was shot and edited with considerable verve.

At least the Festival ended on a high note with *The Immortal Story*, Orson Welles' first film in colour and a minor masterpiece. Originally made for French television, and elegantly shot by Willy Kurant, this adaptation of an Isak Dinesen novella sees Welles back at the very top of his form. Welles himself plays a rich American merchant in *fin de siècle* Macao who senses his approaching death and determines, as a last act worthy of his power, to make a legend come true. The legend, recounted by generations of seafarers, tells of a young sailor offered five guineas to make love to a rich old man's beautiful young wife. One sailor, he decides, will be able to tell the tale as it happened; but the moment of truth is death to the old bull. Welles is here back with *Citizen Kane*, both in style (much deep focus and use of shadow and silhouette) and subject (the unbridgeable gap between power and omnipotence). The film demands more space than I have here, and one hopes it will soon be seen in London. Meanwhile, it has beautifully judged performances from Jeanne Moreau as the woman of the story and Roger Coggio as the old man's wily secretary; and above all, the massive, magnificent presence of Welles himself.

DAVID WILSON

"LEBENSZEICHEN".



KARLOVY VARY

THE GREAT QUESTION MARK hanging over the Karlovy Vary Festival this year was whether reverberations of the events of Pesaro and Cannes and of the political debates inside Czechoslovakia would have a vitalising effect on an institution so conspicuously devoted to an ideal that could only be described as that of soporific co-existence.* Any such hopes soon proved unfounded. From the first days of the Festival it became clear that freedom from politics, rather than political freedom, was to be the watchword. The Americans sent some liberal problem films; the Russians likewise. The Western European contribution was uniformly conventional, with one exception, the West German *Make Love not War*, which was well intentioned but disastrous. Inevitably perhaps, from a Western point of view, interest was focused on films from the Socialist countries of Eastern Europe, and on the Cuban films, both in and out of competition.

In a *palmarès* which served to consecrate the prevailing torpor, it was this last group that ran away with most of the prizes. The Grand Prix went to Jiri Menzel's *Indian Summer*, and other prizes to the Cuban *Memorias del Subdesarrollo*, to an innocuous but delightful Hungarian film, Pal Sandor's *Clowns on the Wall*, and to the Yugoslav *When I Am Dead and Gone* by Zivojin Pavlovic. With depressing predictability one prize was awarded to the United States—for *In Cold Blood*—and one to the Soviet Union—for *The Sixth of July*, a historical reconstruction of events leading up to the exclusion of the Left Social-Revolutionaries from the revolutionary government in 1918, notable mainly for the way it represented Lenin less as a revolutionary mobilising the people against a reactionary *coup d'état* than as a company chairman stamping out a boardroom revolt.

It is hard to speak with confidence about *Indian Summer*. Derived from a novel written in a deliberately archaic style and set in a small town about the beginning of the century, it depends heavily on the literary quality of the dialogue and the contrast of period between words and image. Watching it while listening with half an ear to the apparent banalities issuing from the earphone commentary, one's main impression was of an exquisite *exercice de style*, part Renoir, part Bergman, but without the spontaneity of the former or the latter's philosophical preoccupations. How just or unjust this impression is only a Czech could say. Certainly in its creation of a provincial routine and of the profound disturbance caused by the arrival in the town of a couple of circus performers, it attains a wry and gentle pathos which many Czechoslovak films seem to aim for but rarely with such success.

The opening scenes are a *tour de force*: three village notables, parson, retired army officer and owner of the bathing establishment, engaged in pretentious but asinine conversation and splashing around in the river; the sudden appearance of the tightrope walker improvising a bridge with his balancing pole, stepping lightly across the river and going on his way. But the promise is not maintained. The brilliance of individual scenes is not matched by the development of the structure, which is rather mechanical and does not succeed in bringing out the suggestive potential of the opening.

The reaction against anything that smacks, however remotely, of socialist realism or 'old guard' attitudes to the cinema, is very strong in Czechoslovakia. Its main effect is to make possible films like the Menzel, which would have been unthinkable five years ago. But it also leads to a quite unjustified critical disdain for a film such as the East German *Ich war neunzehn*, prejudged as 'Stalinist'. In fact nothing could be less Stalinist than Konrad Wolf's new film, which is a work of rare intelligence and precision. The story, at first sight unpromising, concerns a young German Communist, brought up in exile, returning home in 1945 on the back of a Russian tank. There is, apparently, an autobiographical element in the story, but one would not be able to deduce this from the style, which is ruthless and unsparing in its analysis both of the

*The Karlovy Vary Festival took place in June, and this report was written some weeks before the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia.



JEANNE MOREAU IN WELLES' "THE IMMORTAL STORY".

objective circumstances of the liberation and of the hero's subjective reactions.

The boy, Gregor, has no nationality. He has repudiated his German past and feels himself to be a Russian. But this is an impossible option, because he has to learn to become a German again and to come to terms with the mistrust of his compatriots for his adopted country. And the mistrust goes deep. However scrupulously the Russians behaved and however glad sections of the German population were to be freed of the Nazi incubus, a fundamental ambiguity remains. The liberator is also the invader, and the crisis of adaptation is perhaps even worse for the Germans (particularly the Communists) who had survived at home than for those who got away. From this point of view the key sequence is one in which the Russians round up a few surviving anti-Fascists in a small town and invite them to a banquet to celebrate the liberation. One of the Germans turns out to have known Gregor's father some years back and Gregor himself when he was a little boy. Gregor for his part refuses this identification and retreats into his neutral role as an interpreter before disappearing and getting drunk outside on his own. Meanwhile, at the banquet, the Russians ply the Germans with drink and try to build up an atmosphere of conviviality if not communication. But the Germans cannot respond. Their spokesman breaks down when proposing a toast and the Russians find themselves isolated, fêting their own victory.

With *Ich war neunzehn*, Wolf is offering a Communist critique of Stalinism, of its intolerance and historical oversimplifications. A critique of this kind has occasionally been attempted, but it has never to my knowledge been achieved with such lucidity and poignancy both in general conception and in execution of detail. In its self-questioning honesty *Ich war neunzehn* is closer to the Cuban cinema than to that of its European neighbours, not only to *Memorias del Subdesarrollo* but to some of the other Cuban films that have been around at festivals this year. To my mind at least, the affirmation of a new Socialist cinema, typified by these films, is worth a hundred westernised new waves.

GEOFFREY NOWELL-SMITH

PESARO

THERE MAY NEVER BE another Pesaro Film Festival, but at least it can be said to have gone out with a bang and not a whimper. Actually, nobody got shot, but charging jeeps filled with truncheon-swinging Carabinieri, sit-ins in the public square, arrests, brawls with local Fascists followed by sympathetic turn-outs by young workers to 'protect' the Festival participants: all this made the Cannes *débâcle* look like pretty small beer. But, and this is the great thing, in spite of it all, in spite of provocation from the Right—and the Left—we got through all the films.

Pesaro is devoted to first and second films by new directors, and so the percentage of really good films is inevitably quite low. This year we had two: Gianni Amico's *Tropici* and Tomas Gutierrez Alea's *Memorias del Subdesarrollo* (*Memories of Underdevelopment*). *Tropics* is nominally an Italian film—made in collaboration with television—about Brazil. This makes it sound like a documentary, which in some respects it is, if you allow that Rossellini's *Flowers of St. Francis* was a documentary on the saint. It has a plot, which in a sense takes up where *Vidas Secas* left off. Tired of struggling on the land, a family makes the long odyssey from the impoverished North East to the new Detroit: São Paulo. And in its 'on the road' aspect, it is not unlike a John Ford wagons-westward film or, indeed, like his Okies on Highway 66 in *The Grapes of Wrath*.

Intercut with the story, however, are three or four documentary sections which serve to open out the drama of this one family into the wider problems of a Third World country. But these 'interruptions' also serve to make the film more complexly entertaining: poverty is a hard subject to treat without boredom or piety, and the inserted episodes provide the film with a Brechtian liveliness. The most controversial of these inserts—and to my mind the most brilliant—is the one in which the young father suddenly steps out of his role, and simply sits down, face to camera, and goes through a Brazilian newspaper commenting ironically on the news. Until this point, most of the audience had been convinced that the film was made with non-professionals; the revelation that this poor peasant was a highly literate and accomplished actor seemed to upset them. For me, it made the film.

Memories of Underdevelopment, adapted from the well-known novel by Edmund Desnoes, is Alea's fourth film, and by far his most accomplished. The word 'underdevelopment' is meant to be ambiguous: it can refer either to the hero, or to Cuba. And actually, the film might well have been called 'After the Revolution.' The protagonist is an ex-landowner in his late thirties, cultivated, Europeanised. His property has been nationalised, and his wife has run off to Miami. Supported by the government's monthly compensation cheque, he decides to stay on in Havana. Not without sympathy for Castro's Cuba, he finds great difficulty in fully understanding it: as a dilettante, it interests him. He spends most of his time wandering about the streets; he has a brief affair with a young girl which ends in tragi-comedy: in an attempt to force him to marry the girl, her family has him up for rape. Justice, however, is done. The film ends with the 1962 missile crisis: the country is mobilised, and at this point our hero has to face a situation which he finally comprehends is beyond his understanding.

Throughout the film, fragments from his past, and from the Batista past of Cuba, well up, giving us a fuller picture both of Cuba and the man. The mood is tropically Chekopian, but Alea's technique is anything but old-fashioned. Using tightly packed crowd shots, he has a genius for zooming in on the face which is significant without being obviously so. There are close-ups in which he moves the camera in so close that the image goes into grain, and then even to dots; it may sound tricky, but it has a thrillingly subcutaneous effect.

All the chaos of revolutionary Cuba is thus seen reflected by an uncomprehending yet 'open' mind. And what better way to present the Cuban revolution to the bourgeois world than through the eyes of a man who might be any well-meaning liberal (like you or me) when faced with a totally new society?

It seemed at the time very courageous of the Cubans to produce and export a film so eminently *fair*. Since Pesaro, however, I have heard a rumour that Desnoes, the author of the book on which it is based, has been arrested for something like 'counter-revolutionary' activity; if true, this may bode ill for wider screenings of the film. Which would be a great shame, for apart from everything else, it is, as I have tried to indicate, a brilliant piece of film-making.

RICHARD ROUD

VENICE

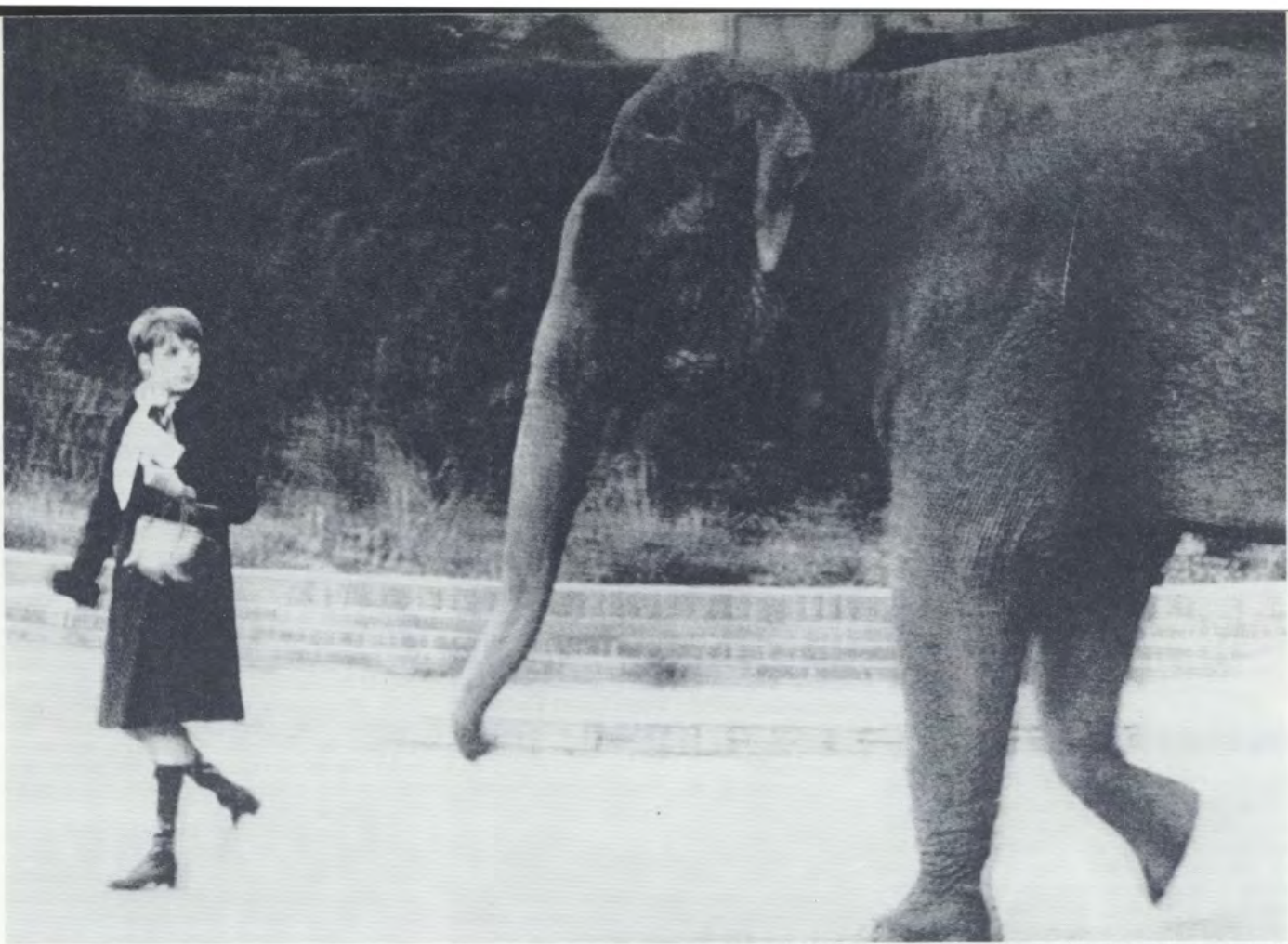
THE ONLY THING which distinguished the protests at Venice this year from all the other Festival manifestations was that the 'contestatori' seemed to have even less idea than usual what they wanted to achieve. A more or a less popular festival, more commercial or less commercial?—you name it, they wanted it. Although discussions and demonstrations went on interminably, with odd outbursts of in-fighting, hordes of police lurking behind the Palazzo, and the opening meanwhile delayed for two days while visiting critics basked patiently in the sun, nothing of all this was half so agit prop as the films themselves when they did finally turn up.

Everybody seemed to be dissatisfied with something or other, and determined to say so at great length. Even with a commercial Italian vehicle like Giorgio Bontempi's *Summit*—a triangle *à la* Lelouch in which a woman has to choose between a politically-minded journalist and a poetically aesthetic student—the background consisted largely of the student riots in Berlin and Paris. Two films (the Dutch *Het Compromis*, and Robert Lapoujade's tiresomely dry philosophical joke about human nature and the atom bomb, *Le Socrate*) included madly significant encounters with The Living Theatre and their engaged stage techniques. One (Peter Emmanuel Goldman's *Wheel of Ashes*) went the whole hog in spiritual torment and did very little but contemplate a young man as he squatted in an empty room or drifted through the Paris streets in search of a mystic something.

Another (*Nostra Signora dei Turchi*, scripted, directed and acted by Carmelo Bene) made no sense whatever as it cut endlessly between piles of bones left by the Turks after the siege of Otranto and a modern young man apparently determined to do himself an injury for the sake of his peace of mind. After several days of watching this sort of at-grips-with-our-soul-and-society junk, little groups of critics could be heard saying wistfully how nice it would be to start a counter-cultural revolution with a festival of Ford Westerns and Minnelli musicals.

Still, one by one the real films emerged, and I left (with Bertolucci's *Partner* and Pasolini's *Theorem* promised but as yet unshown) with half-a-dozen in the bag. Not a bad haul, I suppose, but only one of these, Alexander Kluge's brilliantly eccentric *The Artistes at the Top of the Big Top: Disorientated*, could reasonably claim to be a major film. It has much the same shape, taste and feel as *Yesterday Girl* but is altogether more assured and more complex. Ian Wright suggested to me that Kluge's method is the exact opposite of Godard's "il faut confronter les idées vagues avec des images claires," and this seems to pinpoint him. Kluge's ideas, as expressed in his texts and dialogue, are very precise, and often more intelligible than his hesitant, allusive, but sometimes vague images.

In this second film, however, he starts with the advantage of a circus setting which is arresting in itself. This, of course, is only an excuse for a subject: as the heroine, who has inherited a circus from her father, makes her proposals for a "Reform-Circus" which will meet the needs of modern society, and struggles with financiers and advisers, one gradually realises that Kluge is really analysing the state and progress of the German cinema from the time when the animals all duly performed their tricks to the crack of Hitler's whip, until today, when the "Reform Circus" fails miserably with ideas which are either pathetically inadequate or much the same as before (and the heroine finds refuge in television). Although the visual style is similar to that of *Yesterday Girl*, there is a new, brilliant precision: stunning shots of the big top being dismantled at night, of the circus acts themselves, of elephants



"THE ARTISTES AT THE TOP OF THE BIG TOP: DISORIENTATED".

shambling through the countryside to cross the frontier illegally, and some wittily edited interviews which take sharp cracks at politics, economics, *et al.* Even if one fails to pick up the admittedly abstruse connections and in-jokes, there is little danger of one being bored by the way the film *looks*.

Equally stunning visually is Juro Jakubisko's *The Deserter*, a weird Slovak film about a young soldier who flees from the horrors of the battlefield back to the peace of his village. Before anyone groans with *déjà vu*, let me add that the soldier returns home to find a pig being slaughtered in the village square; his arrival provokes a chain reaction of quarrels among the villagers; and soon everybody is inflicting unspeakable atrocities on everyone else while Death—a grinning, skull-like refugee from a Bergman film—reaps a rich harvest. Jakubisko's vision is at once coarse and mocking, tender and poetic, moving easily from the grim, grey-greenish battle scenes of the beginning, where Death picks his prim way through the rotting corpses, to the fairytale village where even greater horrors are enacted amid the nestling cottages, the bright flowers and the peasant costumes picked out in gay colours like Victorian valentines. It has exactly the same unsettling, surrealist quality as Beddoes' *Death's Jest-Book*, where the Jacobean obsession with death and decay was recreated in the pure, clear imagery of the Romantic poets.

Maurice Pialat's *L'Enfance Nue* is a first film of exceptional promise which seems likely to be underrated for two reasons: firstly, because the direction is so discreet and self-effacing; secondly, because its story of a boy drifting into delinquency after being boarded out with foster parents invites instant comparison with *Les Quatre Cents Coups*. Like Truffaut, Pialat has managed to capture the self-enclosed world of childhood, notably in scenes where the boy steals a box of choc ices from under the nose of a stern vendor in a cinema, or wrecks a passing car by hurling rivets at it from a bridge; but he also pins down much more accurately and fairly than Truffaut did the genuine bewilderment of the adults who simply cannot understand how the boy can respond to their affection for him and yet, in spite of himself, still be delinquent. There are occasional weaknesses and hesitations among the non-professional cast, but for the most part Pialat has

wrung from them performances of astonishing truth and accuracy far beyond anything professionals could achieve. Above all, he steadfastly refuses to sentimentalise, so that two of the best scenes in the film—the death of the old grandmother with whom the boy has broken through to a delightfully bizarre relationship; and a scene where the foster mother tells two starry-eyed boys the story of how she came to 'have' them—are emotionally involving precisely because they don't sit up and beg for your heart.

Wild in the Streets and *The Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach*, both pleasing in different ways, have been written about elsewhere in *SIGHT AND SOUND*, but *Me and My Brother* is a sharp reminder that Robert Frank (of *Pull My Daisy* and . . . well, yes . . . *Sin of Jesus*) was one of the most talented precursors of that cinematic debility called the American Underground. Accompanied by a commentary as fuzzily offbeat as Kerouac's for *Pull My Daisy*, *Me and My Brother* is ostensibly a study of Julius Orlovsky, a catatonic schizophrenic who lives with his brother Peter and Allen Ginzberg in New York. The film rambles all over the place, sometimes amusingly, sometimes self-indulgently, but always at the centre there is the disturbingly quiet, self-contained figure of Julius, whose occasional painful, fragmentary utterances suddenly blot out the flow of talk around him, making it seem unnecessary and insignificant. A shaggy dog of a film, admittedly, but I'd rather watch it than almost any other underground film you care to mention.

Lastly, a few oddities, nonentities and disappointments. Rudolf Noelte's *The Castle*, promised at Cannes but caught in the *débâcle*, turns out to be an object lesson in how not to film Kafka. Maximilian Schell, as the unfortunate surveyor caught in the web of bureaucracy, wanders around looking doleful in a series of palely beautiful snowscapes while an assortment of aged bureaucrats and comic clerks put over the message about red tape with inexpressible tedium.

For its first half, Charles Belmont's *L'Écume des Jours* manages to capture something of the brilliant, quirkish fantasy of Boris Vian's novel. In some engagingly decorative sets, a young couple are drawn together by their shared passion for

(Continued on page 215)

IN THE PICTURE

The Great Race

THE GREAT CHE RACE looked like providing one of those totally unexpected moments of truth that filmgoers always dreamt of: the confrontation of several film-makers taking up the same subject. Now, however, it seems to be turning into the great drop-out. The race could have spilled passions on and off screens, and brought the movies into the thick of this extraordinary year of revolt against liberal tenets. But already the original field is down to two-and-a-half runners.

As everyone knows, the object of this directors' steeplechase was to immortalise on the screen Ernesto 'Che' Guevara. An Italian, Paolo Heusch, was the first to yell "Roll 'em" in Sardinia, and right behind him is still the American Richard Fleischer, as well as an anonymous Cuban team. Everyone else seems to have dropped out.

It would have been something. There was Tony Richardson, fresh from *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, commissioning Alan Sillitoe to write a script and retaining the services of Albert Finney to play Che. There was Francesco Rosi, maker of possibly the best movie on Marxism and political ambivalence, throwing away *23 Stab Wounds* (a modern treatment of Julius Caesar's assassination) to get into the race, possibly with Alain Delon. There was clever Claude Lelouch announcing his intentions; and Jean-Luc Godard getting ready after having blue-printed the May student revolt in France in *La Chinoise*. And there were others: Antoine d'Ormesson, director of *Arrestao*, announcing that he wanted Miguel Castillo, last seen in the film of Sartre's *Le Mur*, for his Che; and Valentino Orsini. There was also a group of Mexicans with deep roots in the Cuban revolution and Latin plottings, sitting around the bonfire at Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* down in Durango, dreaming up raw-nerved scenarios with facts and fiction and dark-eyed beauties.

But two Che features and the Cuban so-called documentary are better than nothing. Francesco Rabal's resemblance to Che won the Mexican actor (Buñuel's Nazarin) the title role in Heusch's low-budget version; Fleischer and 20th Century-Fox have signed Omar Sharif.

Although it may seem ludicrous, and to

Maoists and Birchers probably obscene, to see an American 'major' in the running to immortalise the United States' bitterest enemy south of the Rio Grande, at kick-off Fox's version is the most interesting, not only because Dr. Zhivago will flesh out the revolutionary guru, but because money can buy knowledge. Fox producer Sy Bartlett has apparently gained access to Che's undoctored field journal, and promises a film that will make both the State Department and Havana want to look the other way.

"History advances in disguise," wrote Régis Debray, now serving a 30-year term in a Bolivian prison for his part in guerrilla action. Heroes also come in disguise, and one of the finer ironies of the Che Race may be the toppling of Debray from his pedestal among the revolutionary heroes. "What betrayed Che was the rich, young French student dilettante," says Heusch. "Having struck up friendship with Che in Cuba, Debray followed him to Bolivia, unaware that he was tailed by two CIA experts. Debray led them to Che's contact woman in La Paz, Tania Laura Gutierrez, who was already known to be working with the guerrillas. Soon Che was recognised."

If in Heusch's film Debray is the bumbling traitor *malgré lui*, Fleischer won't have the 27-year-old Parisian in his version at all. But Tania—after all, this is a Hollywood movie—will feature prominently as La Pasionaria, that brave heroine who in all revolutions is willing to risk her all for the cause. It is not known, however, if the new Hollywood realism will stretch to include the fact that Tania was five months pregnant when she and Che were killed last October.

"We're down to the names of the guerrillas who were with Che when he was caught, and even their fake names that the Bolivians don't have," says Bartlett, who starts shooting *Che!*—as Fox's entry is called—in Puerto Rico in September.

Heusch (previous credits *Death Comes from Outer Space* and *I Married a Werewolf*) tried to persuade the Bolivians to let him make his film in their country. "They were willing, but they made one condition: that I use their official version that Che was shot in battle, rather than after he had been a prisoner," Heusch told an interviewer.

Fox producer Sy Bartlett is a former screenwriter (shared writing credits on *Twelve O'Clock High*, *Danger Patrol*, *The Big Country*, among others), and a World War II intelligence officer. After logging 70,000 miles flying "to the strangest of places," he has come up with facts which his scenarist Michael Wilson was putting into action and dialogue in Hollywood this summer. Even to Maoist True Believers, Wilson's name must command respect. He

Rita Tushingham—Correction

REFERENCES to Miss Tushingham were made in the article "A Maestro not a Maharishi" in the Summer issue of *SIGHT AND SOUND*. In particular, mention was made of a rat appearing on the sets, which sent Miss Tushingham "scurrying to her car, where she locked herself up for an hour and refused to come out." We regret that this statement is untrue and apologise most sincerely to Miss Tushingham.

was the screenwriter of *Salt of the Earth*, that 1951 indictment of the treatment of Mexican-American labourers which was boycotted in the U.S. for ten years. He also wrote George Stevens' *A Place in the Sun*; and in more recent years has co-scripted *The Sandpiper* and *Planet of the Apes*.

To Bartlett, *Che!* will be uneditorialised truth. "Sure Che was an extraordinary man. Anybody graduating from medical school at 24 and choosing the life of a hunted animal is a totally committed man. I think of *A Man for All Seasons* somehow. To some he's a saint, to others the devil, and we're not going to try to change anybody's mind—which is something you can't say for some of the other Che projects. We'll let Che speak his piece. We're simply in the position of being able to tell the truth, which in itself is sensational."

The latest and most regrettable drop-out is Rosi: a brief announcement from Rome in August said that he and his producer Alberto Grimaldi had decided two Che pictures were enough, and that their own would be shelved. After *Salvatore Giuliano*, with its mixture of polemics, politics and superior journalism, Rosi had looked the advance winner—the man likely to approach with the most intuitive understanding the only authentic hero the 'extra-parliamentary opposition' has.

Che is star-billing: the man who on a grubstake of \$20,000 and with ten guerrillas set out to capture five Latin American countries, and whose ideas have been taken over by a whole generation in revolt. Come 1969, and we should know what the movies manage to do with the legend.

AXEL MADSEN

One Plus One

IT IS WELL OVER a year now since a Greek lady called me on the telephone, told me she had heard I was a friend of Godard, and asked me to put her in touch with him: she wanted him to make a movie for her. It was going to be the first film she had ever produced, she said, and she wanted to get the best director to make it for her. She had the subject all ready, too: abortion. I must confess I didn't take it very seriously: the lady was probably a dilettante; anyhow, she'd get nowhere with Godard, who would never agree to make a film in England. So I gave her his secretary's telephone number and wished her luck, assuming that this was the last I'd hear of the matter.

Was I wrong! Eleni Collard got hold of Godard, talked him into the film, talked the Rolling Stones into taking part, and shooting began in June. Soon after came reports that Godard had abandoned the film—for various conflicting reasons—and once again, that was presumably that. And then, in the third week of July—never underestimate the power of a Greek woman—he was back again shooting *One Plus One* at Lombard Wharf, Lombard Row, Battersea.

The day I went down to watch they were working on a very elaborate sequence. Rails had been laid down in the axle-grease of an automobile junkyard; a dozen Negroes were lined up. The shot began with the camera on a presumably important African leader being interviewed on tape, and then panned around to track along the dozen men who were passing rifles and bren guns from one to another, all the while shouting inflammatory and obscene Black Power slogans. The last man in the row piled them up next to two very white girls in Persil-white gowns lying face down in the grease. ("Just have a little nap,

girls," Godard had told them.) Then the guns were picked up, one by one, and passed back up the line; the camera followed, and finally came to rest on the interview session.

The whole thing lasted about eight minutes. Talking to Godard later, I remarked on the length of the shot, to which he slyly replied that the whole film was going to consist of ten eight-minute takes, unless of course he decided to do it in eight ten-minute takes instead. Evil tongues, of course, may say that he is just in a hurry to get the hell out of London, and that this is the quickest way to make a film. I doubt it. Typically enough, Godard, who started the move away from the Wellesian/Hitchcockian/Bazinian sequence shot, has been moving back in the last few years towards less and less fragmentation: the long takes in *Masculin Féminin*, *Deux ou Trois Choses*, and of course, most spectacularly, *Weekend*.

After Antonioni and Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard has come to London. The place will probably never look the same again.

RICHARD ROUD

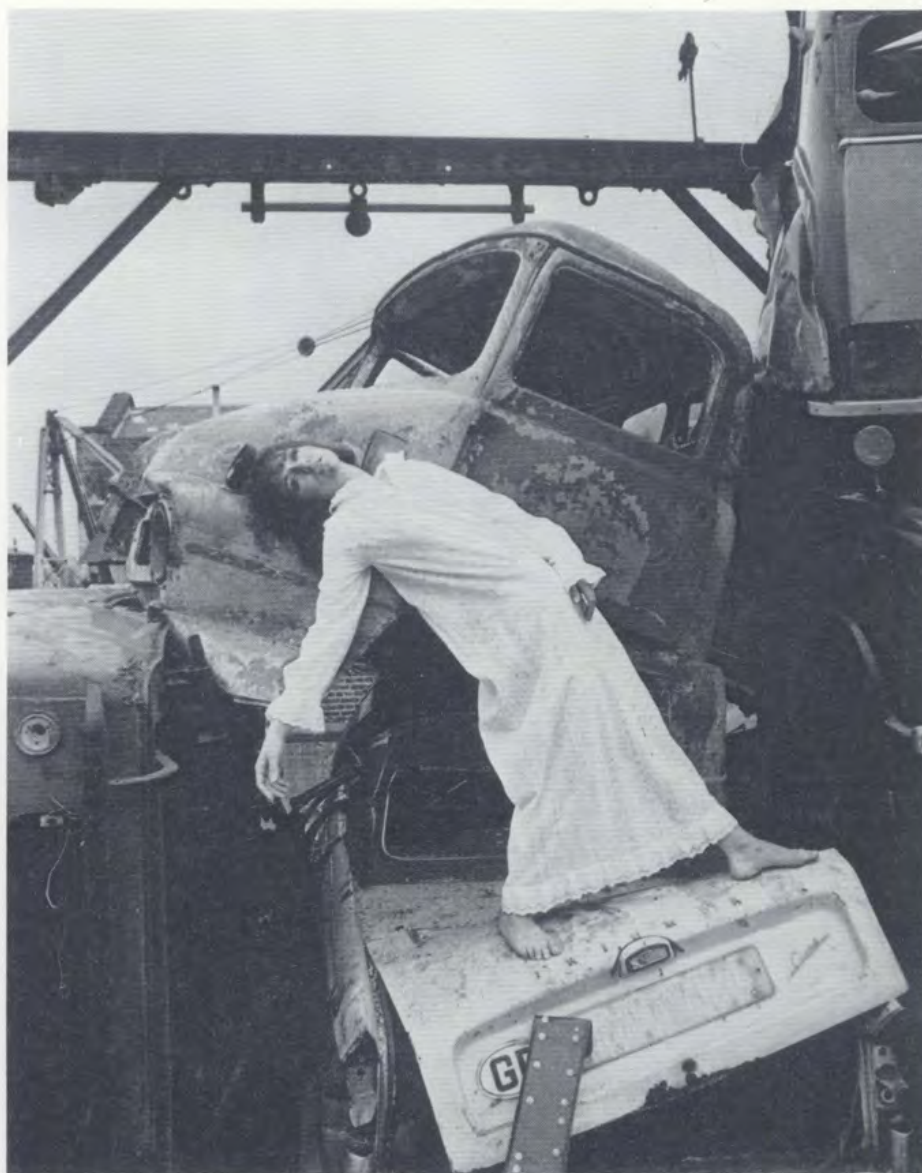
Pula 1968

MANY MORE FOREIGN VISITORS than usual attended the 15th Festival of Yugoslav Films at Pula in July, in the hope of discovering the rich new crop of talent promised last year by *The Switchboard Operator*, *Rondo*, and *Happy Gypsies*.

Perhaps the most impressive feature of the new Yugoslav cinema is its variety. No two directors are working along the same lines, and the staple diet of war films and costume melodrama hasn't prevented Makavejev, Pavlović, Djordjević, Babaja, and others from pursuing their idiosyncratic themes. To a large extent this variety stems from natural causes, such as the barriers of language and religion that divide most of the country's six republics, and the flourishing existence of a dozen or so companies that offer a film-maker a wider choice than is open to his counterpart in Hungary or Czechoslovakia.

The technical equipment of the Yugoslav studios, well tested by visiting productions like *Isadora* (Reisz), and *Flammes sur l'Adriatique* (Astruc), is the equal of any in Europe. The comparative economic freedom that Tito's regime has inspired means that an individual company like Zagreb Film can turn out around 200 commercials a year for western products in addition to more than a dozen cartoons and documentaries. A successful feature can recoup its budget in the domestic market, although each republic has a fairly sophisticated system of awards and subsidies to encourage producers to support offbeat projects. Finally, players are now freelance, and thus at the disposal of any film-maker who can persuade them to work with him.

So, as Makavejev told us, the problem facing newcomers to direction is not so much one of resources as one of expression. The strength of the Czech new wave has been its capacity to nourish new talents. But in Yugoslavia, who is there to follow up the success of Makavejev and Pavlović? This is the question that Pula neatly sidestepped this year. The established talents, with the notable exception of Purisa Djordjević (whose *Noon* was a disaster), entered films of quality, but the only debut of significance was that of 26-year-old Branko Ivanda, a former critic and graduate of the Film and Theatre Academy in Belgrade. His feature *Gravita-*



"ONE PLUS ONE": GODARD GIRL IN A BATTERSEA JUNKYARD.

tion tells of a melancholy young clerk who tries to break away from his parents' bourgeois life and indulges in a series of capers that with their witty dialogue and surrealist settings remind one of Skolimowski.

The winner of the Golden Arena was, rightly, Zivojin Pavlović's *When I'm Dead and White*, a bleak study of the 'lower depths' of Yugoslav society, in which the lean and hungry young hero steals, cheats, and laughs his way to a gruesome death. People in this sordid landscape are evasive and overwhelmed by shame. Only their urgent will to live enables them to survive. *Dead and White* is Pavlović's fourth feature film and his style is as uncompromising as ever, based on sharp narrative skill and a taste for grey, unglamorous images.

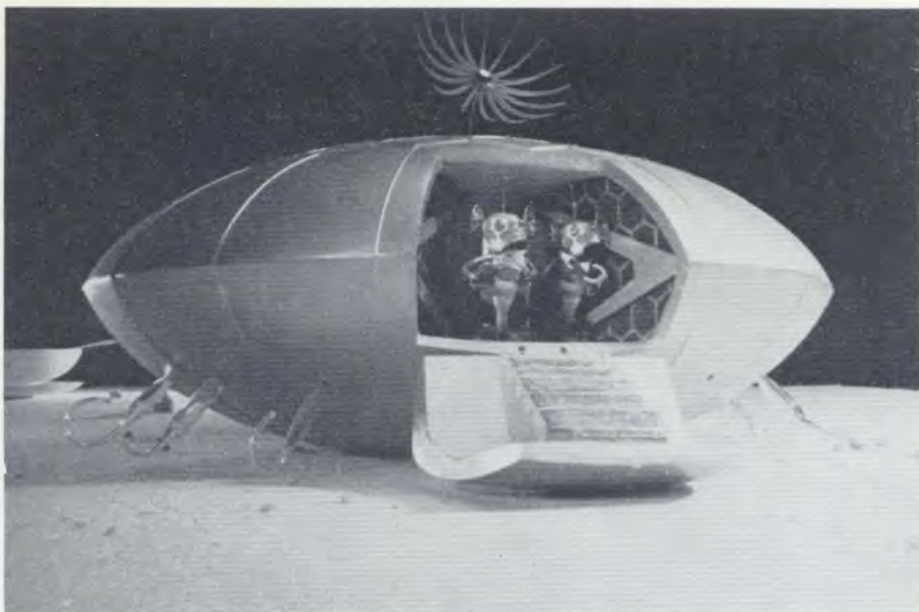
By comparison, Makavejev's new picture is a *jeu d'esprit*, in which he has cheerfully exhumed a Serbian talkie made in secret during the Nazi Occupation by a narcissistic acrobat named Aleksić. Makavejev binds the slabs of melodrama together with wartime newsreels and up-to-date interviews with Aleksić and his crew. The result is, in the words of its author, a "peculiar cinematic time machine," a collage that evokes the Forties both whimsically and acutely.

Finally, a word about *Playing at Soldiers*, which was screened without much success at Cannes and yet looked surprisingly honest and decisive in the context of the other entries at Pula. Bato Cengić has already won prizes for short films, but this is his first feature, and its look at post-war prejudices in a mountain orphanage seems more relevant to all our experiences than any number of Yugoslav partisan movies.

PETER COWIE

Fantascienza

FESTIVAL JURIES don't usually confront the Press before the awards are announced, but at Trieste in July this year the five-man team headed by writer-director Mario Soldati was unexpectedly called upon at about the halfway mark to explain what it thought it was doing. This made for an intriguing confrontation. As nobody has been able to agree what the term science-fiction may be permitted to cover since Hugo Gernsback invented it in 1926, the Jury's explanations wandered erratically over a wide area of argument, complicated by the revelation that the Italian term *fantascienza* under which Trieste operates can be translated to mean the exact opposite of Gernsback's phrase.



SPACESHIP LANDING ON A CAFE TABLE IN "CERTAIN PROPHECIES".

Evidently it all depended on nationality as to what one was looking for among the forty or so features and shorts screened by the Festival (Trieste's sixth)—but personal obsessions, of course, also played their part. True science-fiction, said the Jury's various voices, was an expansion of knowledge, a distorting mirror, a method of allegory, a serious examination of scientific trends, a contemporary conscience, a rethinking of the future. Films that were not technically good were definitely not s-f, which for one juror apparently ruled out *Alphaville* (a past Trieste prizewinner) and for another, a luckless television film in the current batch that had got itself screened on 16mm. in the wrong ratio; on the other hand, *Planet of the Apes*, it was asserted, wasn't s-f either.

Unable to resolve its differences, the Jury settled uneasily for the conclusion that everything put before it should be regarded as science-fiction simply through having been accepted into the Festival, although this ranged all the way from a wordy documentary about high-school drop-outs to an animated film, all squares and graphs, actually made by a computer. The Press, largely composed of burning-eyed fan magazine editors, was clearly none too convinced, and disputes over eligibility of the various entries continued to be heard for the rest of the week. Was the Polish vampire film admissible, for example? Or the Japanese monster movie, in which Godzilla, Mothra, and a rather fetching giant lobster battled for supremacy? In the last resort there seemed to be the least amount of argument over Michael Reeves' *The Sorcerers*, which hinges on the use of a machine to give the ultimate in voyeurism, and the film duly won itself a Golden Asteroid, with a silver one for Catherine Lacey and a specially created one for Boris Karloff.

The film that caused the greatest controversy, however, was the Czech entry, Zbynek Brynych's *I, the Justice*, which was certainly the best made of the Festival. The Czechs have established a tradition of winning at Trieste, perhaps because, as Brynych remarked during his press conference, while science-fiction means space-ships to most people, for the Czechs it means freedom. In the case of *I, the Justice*, ironically enough in view of the newspaper

headlines, the theme was freedom from Fascism. Based on a novel written in 1946, the story investigated what might have happened to Hitler if he had survived the war, concluding that, in the grand tradition of history, one dictator is customarily succeeded by another.

Elsewhere, less portentous conclusions were reached. Russian astronauts attained the stars but were still haunted by sentimentality and Dovzhenko, American astronauts continued to grapple against tentacled squeaking monsters with a gift for parthenogenesis, and the Yugoslav studios turned out a fine set of cartoons reducing mankind to idiosyncratic ciphers. Best of the parables, to my mind, was in fact Hungarian: a splendid puppet short called *Certain Prophecies*, in which two mouse-like galactic visitors land on a café table and shake their heads over what remains of Earth—crumbs, fishbones, and a brimming ashtray. It's a neat inversion of what is unarguably a classic s-f situation, and has the added merit of being almost true, just the same. One need surely ask no more of science-fiction than this.

PHILIP STRICK

Too Late Blues

JULES DASSIN DIRECTS his all-Negro cast in *Up Tight* with clenched zest. The robbed or dirty-jeaned characters in this Alexander Trauner decor of a ghetto bowling alley look like something out of a Black Power nightmare, which is exactly what they are supposed to. In the race race, as cynics call it, Dassin is making the first top-budget (over \$2 million) film ever released by a major (Paramount) to be exclusively concerned with the black man's view of things. But he is hard-pressed. Warner Brothers-Seven Arts have signed Gordon Parks, the first Negro director to work the Big Time, and Columbia has James Baldwin toiling over the script of a film on the career of Malcolm X.

"It's the story of an informer in a revolutionary situation," says Dassin between takes. "The story begins the day Martin Luther King was murdered and it takes place in Cleveland. We shot some stuff there, but came back here a little early. The pressure was too much up there." From black militants? "Yeah, that too. They

were very suspicious in the beginning... We're beyond Civil Rights. We're in there where it hurts, dramatising the alternative routes for Negroes today—Dr. King's non-aggression and the violence of the Black Power movement."

Dassin shares writing credits on *Up Tight* (a title he's not sure he likes) with two Negroes he also put in the film: the novelist Julian Mayfield, and Ruby Dee, the actress seen in *Raisin in the Sun* and *The Balcony*. They play the informer and his girl friend, with Raymond St. Jacques (last seen as a *tonton macoute* in *The Comedians*) as the militant leader and Frank Silvera as the man pleading for moderation.

When the film was first announced as Dassin's remake of John Ford's classic *The Informer*, the reaction was hardly enthusiastic. The project, *Variety* tartly noted, sounded "a lot like Hollywood's answer to David Merrick's all-Negro *Hello Dolly*." "You'd have to be a complete fool to remake *The Informer*: it's a great film," counters Dassin. "My film is in no real sense a remake of Ford's, except that they both deal with a man who informs on one of his compatriots in a revolutionary situation." The theme, of course, is as old as Jesus and Judas (incidentally, Roger Corman wants to make a film along these lines, in which the betraying disciple is portrayed as a Jewish patriot who sells Jesus in order to provoke Him into leading an open revolt against the Roman occupation).

In the present fast-changing landscape, Dassin may in a sense be too late; although watching him at work—tense, authoritative and ebullient—makes one feel he may pull it off, and question James Baldwin's postulate that only black artists have a moral right to deal with black life. Dassin could be the right man for this tight story of betrayal, and one remembers with affection those early urban exposures: *The Naked City*, *Thieves' Highway* and *Night and the City*. Militant Negroes, however, don't want even compassionate white concern, and W7 may be doing the only right thing in signing Gordon Parks to put on film a black man's story.

Meanwhile, Ossie Davis and Godfrey Cambridge are leading a protest against the filming of William Styron's *The Confessions of Nat Turner*. "You are murdering the legend of Nat Turner, one of the great ethnic heroes of black Americans," the group told Norman Jewison and producer David Wolper in an open letter, asking that a film be made on the historical facts about this 18th-century leader of an unsuccessful slave rising, or that no picture be made at all. Critic Richard Gilman (in *The New Republic*) explained the book's success by the fact that readers have strenuously wanted to see it as something else: "They wanted to see it, white and Negroes alike, as a novel about a black man, about slavery and rebellion against slavery, a kind of manifesto, a statement backed by the prestige of literature, with immediate social and political consequences." Jewison has defended the unmade film (and the inflated investment of \$600,000 for the screen rights) by saying the protestors have only to read Styron's introduction. "Styron says he is not writing history, but a meditation on history," Jewison told the *Los Angeles Times*. As for his own record, Jewison feels that *In the Heat of the Night* speaks for itself.

TV, meanwhile, has been digging recently into the Hollywood vaults, showing up

Glamourland's treatment of Negroes from the racism of *Birth of a Nation* to more recent examples of distortion and patronage, and exposing such unlikely villains as Shirley Temple movies. Example: little Shirley plantation owner bravely awaiting the arrival of the Yankees, while a palsied slave cowers behind her, saying, "Oh, honey-chile, them Yankees is mighty powerful... they can even change the weather."

AXEL MADSEN

Edinburgh Festival

EDINBURGH WAS GOOD this year. The programme of feature films was lively and crowded enough to make it quite unnecessary to fall back on documentaries and student shorts. Although, of course, some of us would have liked to have more time for these. Dr. Grierson, whom all Edinburgh told us not to miss, gave a thoroughly inspiring address about the convictions and loyalties that the cinema ought to stand for.

The main talking points were Corman's two movies, *The Wild Angels* and *The Trip*, and the solemn Czech epic *Marketa Lazarova*. I was sorry not to like the Czech film, which is the sort from which people emerge perplexed about the actual plot but sure that it was Art. But it did have an extremely effective horror build-up in the last half-hour. *The Trip* is a piece of sheer technical virtuosity about a youth's experiences under LSD and, like *The Wild Angels* only less so, acts on the audience like a drug. Watching *The Wild Angels*, which is about a Californian motor cycle gang, I was conscious (just) of garish colour, an unreality about all the characters, negligible acting and a certain spuriousness about that background of news from Vietnam (which features in both Corman's films). But so tremendous is the impetus of the movie, and especially of the funeral procession at the end, that these important things hardly seem to matter.

By comparison with Corman's single-minded vision of specific nightmares, *Wild in the Streets*, the Festival's next most controversial film, seemed very amiable indeed. About a pop singer who becomes president of the United States and farms out everybody over thirty-five on hallucinatory drugs, this is a reasonably amusing comment on our times. Cigar-smoking Samuel Arkoff, chairman of American International, the company that produced all three films, came to Edinburgh armed with all the answers. "Any new idea," he said, "is an incitement to violence."

Another American entry of note was *Titicut Follies*, a documentary shot in a hospital for the criminally insane. It underlines to a spine-chilling extent the natural fear of such institutions, however benevolent their intentions. There is a scene in which a patient explains how, daily, he's getting worse "because of the situation, because of the circumstances." The doctors' verdict: more medication, larger doses of tranquillisers.

From Russia there was an intimate little film, *A Café in Pliushiha Street*, directed with a good deal of feminine insight by Tatiana Lioznova. Temptation, in the form of a friendly taxi-driver, is thrown in the way of a naive country housewife (played with humour and sensuality by Tatiana Doronina) whose husband neglects her a bit. *Sidetrack*, from Bulgaria, is attractively sophisticated, both in style and subject—the accidental reunion of two

married people who had a ten day love affair when they were students, and who find the old attraction still there. *I Was Nineteen*, from East Germany, is a measured and thoughtful picture by Konrad Wolf, who reconstructs episodes from his own life in showing the experiences of a German boy who returns to his native land as a Red Army lieutenant at the end of the war.

Films that it was good to have the chance of seeing for the first time in this country included Jörn Donner's *Black on White*, Chabrol's *Les Biches*, Kjell Grede's *Hugo and Josefina* and Johannes Schaaf's *Tatowierung*. *Week-End*, which SIGHT AND SOUND readers will be well aware, reached London some time back, finally caught up with me. Of all these pictures, *Week-End* not excluded, my personal choice would be Jan Troell's *Here Is Your Life*, a lyrical adaptation of an Eyvind Johnson novel about a boy coming to grips with adult life in poverty-stricken northern Sweden at the time of the First World War. Troell, who has been Bo Widerberg's cameraman, also co-scripted, shot and edited this very promising first feature.

ELIZABETH SUSSEX

Work in Progress

MICHELANGELO ANTONIONI: A Negro riot and a hippies' camp near Death Valley feature in *Zabriskie Point*, Antonioni's first American film, shot on location with a cast of unknown actors, about a girl who ends an affair with an older married lawyer to start one with a disillusioned white liberal. A Carlo Ponti production for M-G-M.

JACQUES DEMY: *The Model Shop*. Re-appearance of Lola (Anouk Aimée) as a mystery woman in Los Angeles, briefly involved with a disturbed, drifting young architect (Gary Lockwood). Demy's first American film, for Columbia.

RICHARD FLEISCHER: American sequences

of *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, a massive drama covering events leading up to and including the attack on Pearl Harbour. Kurosawa directs Japanese sequences. Fox.

JOHN FRANKENHEIMER: *The Gypsy Moths*, adventure drama about free fall parachutists, starring Burt Lancaster, John Phillip Law, Deborah Kerr. A Frankheimer-Lewis Production for M-G-M.

ALFRED HITCHCOCK: To follow the spy story *Topaz* with *The Short Night*, a thriller by Ronald Kirkbride in which a defector escapes from a British jail and heads for Russia by way of Finland. For Universal.

SIDNEY LUMET: Stockholm locations for the first film version of Chekhov's *The Seagull*, starring Vanessa Redgrave, James Mason, Simone Signoret and David Warner. New translation by Moura Budberg; sets and costumes by Tony Walton; director of photography Carlo Di Palma. For Warner Brothers-Seven Arts.

ERMANNIO OLMI: Filming in Milan *Un Certo Giorno*, a comedy in colour set in the advertising world. With Brunetto del Vita, Giovanna Ceresa.

JOHN SCHLESINGER: New York locations for *Midnight Cowboy*, his first American film, adapted from the novel by James Leo Herlihy about a brash young Texan (played by off-Broadway actor Jon Voight) who hopes to make a fortune as a lady-killer. Dustin Hoffman co-stars. For United Artists.

FRANCOIS TRUFFAUT: To follow *Baisers Volés* with *La Sirène du Mississippi*, starring Catherine Deneuve and Jean-Paul Belmondo. From another novel by *Bride Wore Black* author William Irish.

BILLY WILDER: Has signed Robert Stephens for the title role in *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* (with Colin Blakely as Dr. Watson), due to start filming in this country early in 1969. Screenplay in collaboration with I. A. L. Diamond, of course. Mirisch Productions for United Artists.

SPIKE MILLIGAN IN RICHARD LESTER'S SCREEN VERSION OF "THE BED-SITTING ROOM".



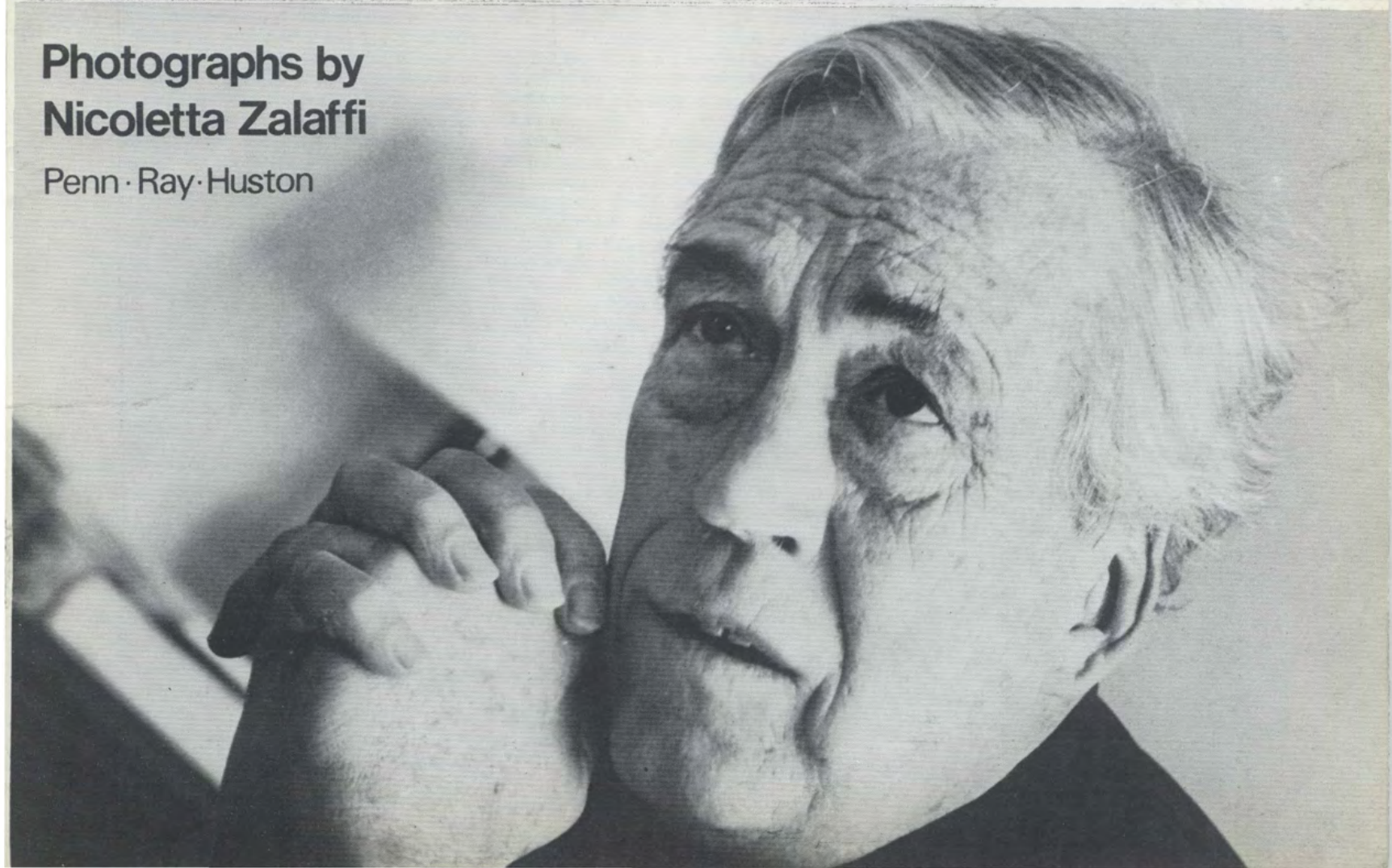
THE CHANGING FACE OF AMERICA





**Photographs by
Nicoletta Zalaffi**

Penn · Ray · Huston





HITCHCOCKERY

Penelope Houston

IN THE INTRODUCTION to his Hitchcock interview book*, François Truffaut lists 28 directors who seem to him, at one time or another, to have fallen under the Master's influence. The assortment is eclectic, ranging from Chabrol, Resnais, Donen (of course) to Bergman, Kurosawa, Delvaux (perhaps), and the 28th entry on the list is François Truffaut (*Fahrenheit 451*). It's slightly surprising to find that Truffaut apparently regards *Fahrenheit* as more Hitchcock-orientated than, say, *La Peau Douce*, that love story cast in the style of a thriller. But future editions are undoubtedly going to contain two additional entries: François Truffaut (*The Bride Wore Black*) and Peter Bogdanovich (*Targets*).

Both Bogdanovich and Truffaut have interviewed Hitchcock lovingly and lengthily, an occupation which, once embarked on, obviously becomes slightly obsessional; and both their films are riddled with allusions, visual nods and becks in the direction of the great man. They compare intriguingly at other points: neither film finally feels Hitchcockian (Truffaut, after all, is Renoir's spiritual son, which can't allow anything closer than a step-fatherly association with Hitchcock); both films deal in the theme of multiple killing, one which for obvious reasons of difficulty and sympathy-switching has never attracted Hitchcock himself; and the Atlantic stretches between Bogdano-

vich's view of murder in public and Truffaut's European preference for bloodless, fantasised death.

Perhaps it's being a little solemn to talk about Jeanne Moreau in *The Bride Wore Black* as a multiple murderess: she would be, that is, if she were real, and if Truffaut hadn't gone to a good deal of trouble to keep her in a state of suspended animation—an enigma, an illusion, an elegant black and white fantasy in a Technicolor landscape. In the opening sequence, she is unmistakably playing Marnie: the half-packed suitcase, the neat little piles of banknotes, the doleful parting from mother and sister, and the moment when, having sadly boarded the train on one side, she ducks briskly down on the other and marches back along the platform (*Marnie* camera angles all around) on her errand of vengeance. But when she turns up to commit her first murder—the avenger in white at the cocktail party, luring her victim out on to the balcony and giving him a vertiginous and entirely unrealistic push—Truffaut is already parting company with Hitchcock. The special quality of *The Bride Wore Black*, it's apparent, is the floating airiness with which it dreams strange dreams.

I haven't read the William Irish novel on which the film is based, though one might guess it to be not unlike his *Phantom Lady*. But whatever its origins, Truffaut's construction is distinctly Hitchcockian: the teasing opening; the quick, cavalier first murder, to keep you

guessing about what the lady may be up to; the slower, more involving second killing (poison in the bank-clerk's arrack in an Alpine village); then, with the third victim, the full disclosure of motive; followed by a longer episode in which the question is whether the lady, by now posing as Diana the Huntress for an artist susceptible enough to have painted her before he met her, will have the heart to shoot her arrow.

As a structure, it ought to work. And in detail the film is often so felicitous that it very nearly does. Moreau doesn't come on to a set: she materialises, suddenly there, with her Bette Davis basilisk stare. And Truffaut has Hitchcockian fun with her delayed entrances—like the sequence in which the little boy keeps glancing over his shoulder on his way home from school, and you expect the apparition in every camera swirl around a bush, and only finally get it after a characteristic trick with a bouncing ball. She has a neat little avenger's diary, in which she meticulously crosses off names; white gloves, to be drawn on primly while a victim groans at her feet; a trick of fingering knives, though it's only at the end that she murderously employs one; and she compels a measure of admiring disbelief which makes Kim Novak in *Vertigo* look like the heroine of a documentary.

One could easily work one's way through *The Bride Wore Black* listing instances of Truffaut's alluring ingenuities—the juxtaposition of scream and Wedding March on the last shot, or Moreau's engaging appearance, in full widow's rig, at the tail end of the funeral procession, or the dream atmosphere of the shooting on the church steps, with its mixture of shock and repetition. But everyone knows the quality of Truffaut's sun-and-shadow charm, and it depends whether you see

**Hitchcock*, by François Truffaut and Helen Scott. (Secker and Warburg, 105s.)

The Bride Wore Black as a diversion, a minor exercise after the (presumable) disappointment of reactions to *Fahrenheit*, or whether you take Truffaut up where he might choose to be taken, on higher Hitchcockian ground.

His problem is the basic one of persuasion—which doesn't mean that one is asking for realism, querying how Moreau apparently comes to know so much more than the police, or how at the end she finds herself in a prison cell practically cheek by jowl with her next (male) victim. But her motive for an extreme course of action is that in a careless moment with a loaded rifle five men destroyed the great love of her life; and to show the great love in a fey slow-motion fantasy (*I Confess?*) of two skipping children really won't do, at any level from parody upwards. The men, in their role of pre-ordained victims, exist only to die; though Truffaut rings the changes on vanity, folly and duplicity by making each in turn see Moreau as an object, an illusion, a prize to be added to the list of conquests or a consolation prize for conquests never attempted. Because her victims would use her if they could, her annihilating use of them seems somehow defensible, if not credible.

"I dozed off. I thought I was at the cinema," says the politician, just before Moreau, in her school-teacher disguise, locks him in the absurd little cupboard under the stairs and tapes down the door. One could repeat it of the film: "I dozed off. I thought I was at a Hitchcock movie." The mistiness is quite deliberate, and knowing Truffaut's liking for the Hitchcock films (*Vertigo*, *Notorious*) which he sees as filmed dreams, the intent seems plain. But Hitchcock, as we know, directs the audience; Truffaut only directs the film, and the dream remains on the screen and never breaks out into the auditorium. *The Bride Wore Black* remains graceful and slender; a Truffaut lamb in Hitchcock wolf's clothing.

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Peter Bogdanovich's *Targets* is, obviously, a far less accomplished piece of work: but it does the trick, it gets the dream (or nightmare) out into the auditorium, it persuades you that suspense isn't a dilettante playing of the murder game attached to an abstract ideal of doomed love, but a stone-cold certainty that someone is going to be painfully done to death. Its murders are a matter of concern.

Like Truffaut, Bogdanovich films like a man who has seen an awful lot of movies: critics share this advantage, or disadvantage, and I'm not sure how valid his premise would seem to a mind not saturated in celluloid. His hero is an ageing star of horror films, Byron Orlok (played by Boris Karloff, and of course drawing on every association Karloff brings with him, as Truffaut draws on the iconographical quality of

Jeanne Moreau). Orlok is tired: the mad count at large in the crumbling chateau has become a joke for sated young audiences, the grandeur has gone, and in a vague way he is worried about a world in which horror is no longer formalised on the screen but blank-faced and incomprehensible in the audience. His young director (played with likeable inexperience by Bogdanovich himself) insists that he has a real part for him, one that will break through the stereotypes; but the old man can't be bothered to read the script. Instead, he and the director find themselves watching Howard Hawks' *The Criminal Code* on late night television: a movie-saturated moment, confronting us with the poised and threatening Karloff of 37 years ago; and equally, of course, confronting the off and on screen Bogdanoviches with Hawks.

Parallel with this, Bogdanovich tells his second story: about a clean-cut all-American boy (Tim O'Kelly) from a sterilised suburban home who kills his wife, his mother and a grocer's delivery boy, packs his armoury into the boot of his car, and then climbs to a sniper's vantage point overlooking the freeway and coolly guns down anything that moves. The boy lives in a dream of guns, a reality of incessant TV and ordered routines. It is not so much, the film perhaps suggests, that he hates his family as that he cannot deny his weapons their purpose. And this is, at first, a tender kind of madness, which

"THE BRIDE WORE BLACK".



flinches a little at the sight of blood, straightens out the corpses and covers the bloodstains with towels from the bathroom: the good child's madness (there's an even stronger echo at the end) of Anthony Perkins in *Psycho*.

There are other Hitchcock reminders: *Vertigo*, and at one moment *Strangers on a Train*. But Bogdanovich is most powerfully Hitchcockian in the way he introduces his first killings, alerting the audience to an awareness of murder

from the moment when the boy opens the boot of his car to disclose his gun collection, then gradually tightening the finger on the trigger as the family go obliviously from television to bed and from bed to breakfast, unaware that the boy is sending forlorn signals for help and that the mechanism of the human time-bomb is already ticking. Hitchcock has spelled out the method and Bogdanovich has learnt the lesson: the route to murder as a positive release from tension. He uses the same double-edged suspense in the later sniping scenes, when sympathy is all with the girl on the road desperately running for help, and fascination all with the lining up of the distant figure in the gunsights, a forced complicity in an act of murder.

It isn't flawlessly done, but it works—partly, of course, because it tunes in so strongly to the American nightmare of the gunman assassin at large in the streets. The last section of the film screws the two threads together. Orlok, reluctantly, has agreed to make a personal appearance at a drive-in theatre. ("How ugly this place has become," he says in a puzzled old man's voice, driving through the seedy-shiny Californian neon night.) The boy, meanwhile, has set up a sniper's post behind the screen itself, firing down at the dazed, popcorn-stuffed faces behind the windscreens, picking off the projectionist in his box, spreading ripples of terror through the audience until the headlights come on, the cars back away, and the manager at last discovers that there's a gunman in the house. This feeling of an almost stealthy retreat by the audience, the dash for home and safety without even pausing to report the killer, is a fearful, unstressed view of life in the slide area. And one can allow Bogdanovich the melodramatic luxury of his ending, in which the old actor strides out alone towards the whimpering sniper, while his image stares madly down from the screen.

One can be grateful that in this country there is no chance of seeing *Targets* in a drive-in theatre: the effect could be uniquely unnerving. For Bogdanovich's film touches a nerve through its imagery: the audience sealed off in their separate cars, little boxes of vulnerability, and the sniper who has submerged all his own identity in his rifle. The attempt to relate the two faces of horror is more notional, unless you take—as Bogdanovich obviously doesn't—a simplistic view of cause and effect; but if the director has to lean every inch of the way on Karloff's presence to make his last confrontation scene work at all, that after all is what stars are there for. And perhaps it's an intriguing comment on these two director-orientated films that in the end they both owe allegiance to principles even older than Hitchcockery. Neither would be imaginable, in anything like its existing form, without these particular star presences.

The 400 blows of FRANCOIS TRUFFAUT

Gilles Jacob

FOR THE LAST few months, the French cinema has been in a state of uproar. In May, the Cannes Festival was brought to an abrupt halt; and at the same time in Paris the *Etats Généraux du Cinéma** came into existence, full of reformist optimism and doomed to failure. More recently, a directors' co-operative has been started; but film-makers have such divergent interests, and the differences between them are so wide, that it's hard to see exactly who or what this organisation is likely to benefit.

In Philippe Labro's new book *Ce n'est qu'un Début*, François Truffaut outlines the circumstances which led (with a little help from him) to the shut-down of Cannes. People have argued that it wasn't for him to intervene, that neither he nor his friends were Jury members, that they hadn't been invited to show their films in or out of competition, in fact that the Festival was not theirs to close. Now they can read his expressions of regret—perhaps rather belated—at having had to send foreign visitors packing, clutching their cans of film under their arms, inadequately informed about what was going on, and in general perplexed by their peculiar welcome.

But in the light of recent events, it seemed to me interesting to try to follow up Truffaut's own attitude.

*On May 17, a free association of *cinéastes* (workers, technicians, scriptwriters, producers, actors, musicians, journalists, moviegoers, etc.) without distinction of employment or Trade Union affiliation, constituted themselves *Les Etats Généraux du Cinéma* to discuss the structural contradictions of working within the film industry in its present form and to try to bring about full employment, freedom to work and freedom of expression within the cinema.



JEAN-PIERRE LEAUD IN TRUFFAUT'S NEW FILM, "BAISERS VOLES".

Fiercely individualist, and hitherto thought of as asocial, he has twice gone into battle alongside film-makers more revolutionary than himself—as fervently militant supporter of Henri Langlois during the Cinémathèque crisis, and as one of those who brought Cannes to a grinding halt. At the same time, he decided to take no part in the work of the *Etats Généraux du Cinéma*, and has not joined the new film-makers' co-operative. His position could look inconsistent: he runs the risk of antagonising both those who regarded him as a reasonable man and those who did not. It's this position which Truffaut defends and develops in the following interview.—G.J.

Why did you stop the Cannes Festival?

Because it was the *logical* thing to do. France was closing down, therefore Cannes had to close down. While I was driving to Cannes on May 17th to take part in a press conference about the Cinémathèque affair, I was listening to the radio and every half-hour came reports of more factories being occupied. I wasn't sorry to see France paralysed, the government in disarray. Next day, when I asked for the Festival to be stopped, I wasn't thinking particularly of a gesture of solidarity with the workers—I'd have been more likely to feel solidarity with the four students who were sentenced to jail after a hasty session in a Sunday court. I wasn't really thinking of challenging or reforming the Festival, of doing away with evening dress or making it more cultural. No, I just felt that in its own interest the Festival should stop of its own accord rather than be halted a few days later by the force of events. I didn't see it as a military coup, I simply

wanted an unambiguous situation. In fact, this is how it happened.

During the night, I was told of the creation of the *Etats Généraux du Cinéma* and their decision to stop the Festival, and I talked to a few people about it. We had no idea how difficult it is to stop this kind of big business event. We just adopted the tactics that had worked for the Cinémathèque: producers who had films in competition would withdraw them, jury members would resign. We made a mistake in not giving more information about the situation in France to people who for a week had been reading nothing but the Festival daily. (You feel differently according to whether or not you've been listening to the news.) This was especially true of foreign journalists and delegates, who naturally had qualms about joining in an anti-government movement. . . .

Anyway, we had to get the Festival stopped, and we did it. It could maybe have been managed more elegantly, but in circumstances like this you're inclined to check your manners with your hat—and someone probably throws away the cloakroom key. I know that a lot of people will hold our attitude at Cannes against us for a long time to come, but I also know that a few days later, when there were no more planes and no more trains, when the telephones weren't working and we'd run out of petrol and cigarettes, the Festival would have looked utterly ridiculous if it had tried to carry on.

Did you sign any manifestos in support of the student movement?

I'm not a professional campaigner. For four months, I'd devoted all my energies to the Cinémathèque affair, in the hope that it could be resolved. The

Government was in the wrong over the *Affaire Langlois*—this is basic, everyone recognises it—and it backed down because people weren't just protesting but protesting in the streets. In February, in the Place du Trocadéro, one of Malraux's decisions was really challenged for the first time. I am not politically-minded and as a rule I try to steer clear of this kind of thing, but after what happened in February I wanted to see the end of this regime.

Can you remind us what stand you took in the Cinémathèque affair?

The Cinémathèque is a private association of 780 members who are also film depositors. The films they deposit make up a considerable part of the Cinémathèque's treasure. In return for the subsidy it allocated annually, the Government had acquired a majority on the Administrative Council. You may say that Langlois and his friends were wrong to let this situation develop. My answer is that Langlois, who might have been suspicious of any ordinary Minister, put his trust in Malraux. In the beginning, everyone trusted Malraux . . . Anyway, when on February 9th the Government took over the Cinémathèque, without first consulting members of the Association, it was using tactics that it has used elsewhere: subvention, then a controlling hand, then absorption. If an organisation doesn't 'think' the same way as the Government, there's a real risk that it may find itself losing its subsidy . . .

In effect, the Cinémathèque affair

gave you something in common with the students. What was it that drew you to the Latin Quarter during the troubles?

The really admirable thing about the student movement, I think, is that it's not self-interested. In May and June I didn't want to go to the Sorbonne. It was too much the smart thing to do, and wrong because it was their affair and their home ground. But I did go quite a lot to the Odéon. It was often very fine. You felt the need of a place where anyone can say anything he likes, as they have in the streets, in London.

While you weren't afraid to stop the enormous machinery of the Cannes Festival, you've refrained from collaborating in any of the reform projects of the Etats Généraux du Cinéma, either on its special committees or in the General Assembly. Why?

I didn't want to join in the Etats Généraux du Cinéma, because I felt that 1,200 people from the profession, meeting together at Suresnes, would never manage to agree. There were workers there who wanted a production output of 140 films a year instead of 80; and now that TV keeps so many of the public in their own homes that just isn't possible. There were artists who wanted more freedom and consequently fewer Union restrictions . . . but without the Unions actually losing anything. And of course there were would-be directors who had little hope of getting into the profession and were looking for

a revolution and a brand new start from scratch. All these meetings and projects were really doomed to failure. I might add that they would have been doomed even if we had a left-wing government, because no government of any sort is likely to put the affairs of the cinema high among its priorities.

Are you a member of the new Directors' Association?

After the failure of the Etats Généraux became obvious, two new technicians' unions were created, as well as a film-makers' association presided over by Robert Bresson and Robert Enrico, with Albicocco, Louis Malle, Doniol-Valcroze among its more active members. I believe they have already collected about a hundred names, but I still don't want to join them. Why not? Perhaps because I don't have much collective or even comradesly spirit. I feel solidarity with Rivette or Godard or Rohmer because I like them and admire their films, but I don't feel I have much in common with Jacqueline Audry, or Serge Bourguignon, or Jacques Poitrenaud. The fact that we are all working at the same profession doesn't mean a thing to me, unless friendship and respect are also involved.

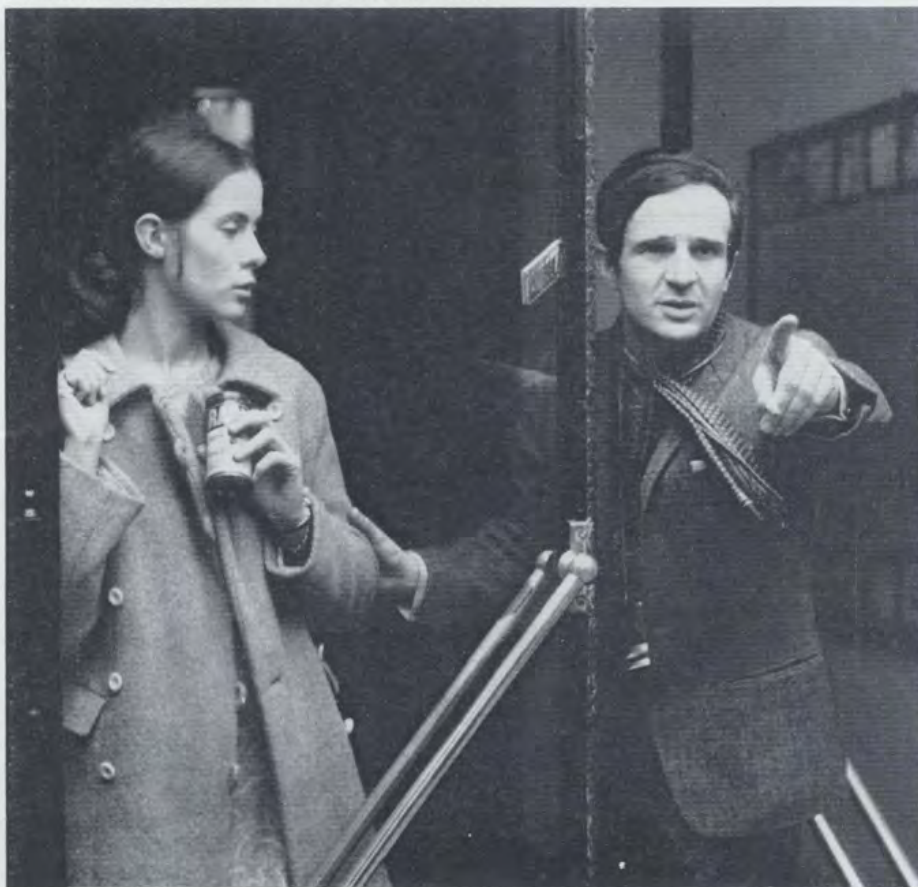
I dislike approaching problems in terms of generalities. It really infuriated me, for instance, to see all the projects of the Etats Généraux beginning with attacks on the existing production system because of the 'profit motive'. Films like *Hiroshima mon Amour* or *Pierrot le Fou* were produced and distributed with courage and discernment. In some East European countries they would have been locked up in a cupboard for a couple of years before the authorities hesitantly let them out; and in Hollywood someone would have come along and re-edited them. The European system seems the best to me simply because it isn't really a system.

To sum up: you're not opposed to film-makers operating from commercial motives, and if you did stop the show at Cannes it wasn't necessarily for the same reasons as some of your fellow-directors.

I personally would rather work for a producer who gives me a hundred million francs because he expects to get back a hundred and thirty million, than have to submit a script to a State committee which will authorise a subsidy after it approves the contents. I'll go so far as to say that, concession for concession, it seems to me less shaming to have to give a film a happy ending for commercial reasons than to have to shoot an optimistic ending for ideological reasons. Anyway today, on July 20th, the anniversary of the unsuccessful attempt on Hitler's life, I think that all films should end with the mushroom cloud over Hiroshima. Because that's what is in store for us, don't you think?

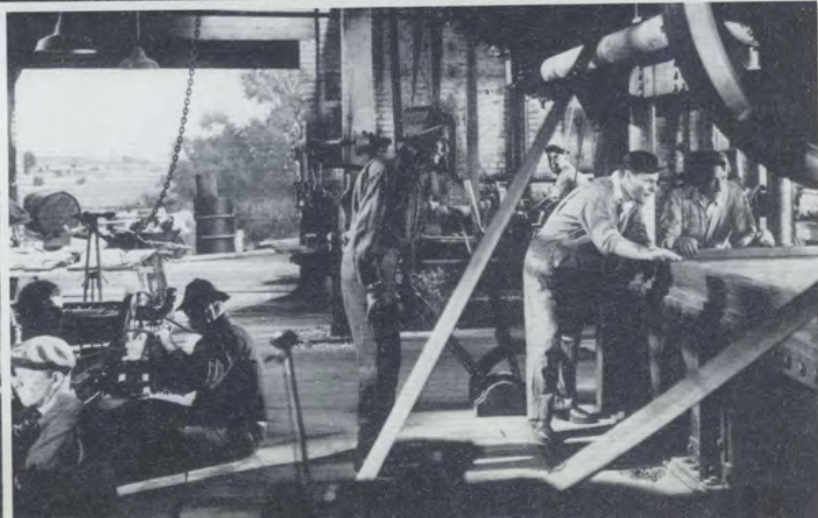
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FRANCOIS TRUFFAUT AT WORK ON "BAISERS VOLES".



WAR WHEAT & STEEL

King Vidor
interviewed
by
Joel
Greenberg



KING VIDOR WAS BORN in Galveston, Texas, in 1894. He began filming almost as a child, and by the time he was 18 had already made two two-reel slapstick comedies, two or three documentaries, and some newsreels. ("We had a camera, a laboratory and a stage: this was the time when you could simply build an open stage with telegraph poles and some cloth over the top . . .") In 1915 he reached Hollywood with his wife, the actress Florence Vidor. ("I tried to get the Ford Motor Company to finance our trip by selling them material for their newsreel, for which they would pay 60 cents a foot. I don't think we sold more than 60 dollars worth, but we got together enough money to make our first payment on a Ford, which at that time sold for about \$500, and we got out here that way, landing here with about 20 cents.") Vidor directed his first feature in 1918; his most recent was *Solomon and Sheba*, in 1959.

What was your first job in Hollywood?

Well, a little bit of everything. I would do anything to get in a studio, just to get inside and watch the directors working. I worked as an extra in a picture, had a 'bit' as a chauffeur, and then I had a job as a script clerk. It was a little different from today's script girl: you almost had to keep accounts. Finally I got a job in the story department at Universal. Then, having learned how to operate a camera, I met a man named George Brown who got me to go out as a cameraman for two or three days on some things he was doing. When he saw that I knew about camera and writing—I hadn't directed, but I told him I had—he gave me the job of directing. Soon after that he left Universal and founded a company for which I must have made ten, fifteen or twenty half-hour films about juvenile delinquency. Then I tried to get a job as a director of features by putting three of these films together, to make them look as if they were one picture. I couldn't do it that way, so I wrote a scenario and got the same people interested that had made those short films—they were doctors, they weren't really motion picture men—and they financed this one picture. It cost \$9,000 and was called *The Turn of the Road*. It was a metaphysical type of film about a man hit by a tragedy—his wife dying in childbirth—who runs away from his friends and family only to find 'the truth within us' at his own fireside.

It was an immediate success. We only had one print which ran in Los Angeles for eleven weeks—which was unusual for that time—and then they took it to New York. All the stars and companies made me offers, but out of loyalty to these nine doctors who had put up \$1,000 each for *The Turn of the Road* I stayed with them for a year. We had no budget to buy stories, so I had to write them from original ideas and things that had happened to me and that I had seen.

One of the offers I had during that time was from First National Exhibitors. They offered to finance three films and I became an independent producer with a studio that was sort of a burdensome operation, losing money. It was a relief to go over to Thomas Ince to make *Love Never Dies*.

Then I did a group of romantic dramas with Florence Vidor. A story that I was very excited about was *Three Wise Fools*. It was intensely human. Someone once told me I had a general theme running through all my pictures. I wasn't too aware of it at any time but probably what interested me was exploring the deeply human feelings of people. *Three Wise Fools*, about three older men and a young girl, was a chance to explore those deep feelings which seemed to me to be important. This was my first film at Metro, released in 1922 or '23.

How long did your contract at Metro go for?

I never signed for long contracts; I might sign for two or three years. I missed out on the pension plan at M-G-M. I was there over twenty years but didn't ever have overlapping contracts.

What were some of the more important pictures you first worked on at the studio?

On Joseph Hergesheimer's *Wild Oranges* we went all the way to Florida to capture the atmosphere: this was one of the first films I know of where a company went that far on location. We got a real tropical mood; the picture was made by

the atmosphere. It seemed a milestone from the reviews, this breakaway from the studio. That's what the title of my book is about: *A Tree is a Tree, a Rock is a Rock, Shoot it in Griffith Park*. If you talked atmosphere, if you talked the importance of ambience to a film, they'd say, "Go on, what's wrong with Griffith Park? Why do you want to go all the way across the country?" But now we go all the way around the world for them.

Elinor Glyn was around for *His Hour*, which she wrote. She was quite weird, probably the most weird person I've ever come across, in her dress, her talk and her appearance. She had false gums that would turn purple when she smiled under the copper-hued vapour lights and she was overly interested in tiny details that didn't make any difference, such as whether somebody was sitting next to someone else who had a name Princess So-and-So. It was a Russian film, and she was remembering all the people she knew in Russia. They were just extras as far as we were concerned, but to her they were princes, and Count So-and-So, and "Oh, she would never wear an ear-ring like that," and she was imagining a lot of things that were not being photographed. We humoured her.

How did you land the assignment of THE BIG PARADE?

I had an idea that I wanted to make films that would not just come to town for a few days and be forgotten. We put all this effort into a film and it would just come for a few days and be gone and that was it; it would just be in one theatre in Los Angeles. I had the idea I'd like to make the kind of film Griffith had made, *Birth of a Nation* and so forth. Irving Thalberg was there and I told him about three themes I had: war and wheat and steel. So he said, "What would you like to do first?" and I said, "Well, I want to read some war synopses." So we read war stories and he went to New York and there was a play running, *What Price Glory* by Laurence Stallings, and he said, "I talked to the author, if you'd like to have him," and he called me up, and I said, "Sounds fine."

I wanted to make an honest war picture. They had all been very phoney until then, all glorifying the officer and the war, and they never had had one with soldiers and privates, they'd never had a single picture with some feeling of anti-war, of realistic war, Stallings arrived with a five-page story. I spent a lot of time with him, and then we went back to New York together and worked out the plot.

It was not planned as a big film by the studio, although that's the sort of film I had in mind. I finished it at \$205,000. Some of the battle scenes I shot in the park near here called Legion Park right next to Griffith Park, and one of them in Santa Monica, at an airfield called Clover Field. I shot some of the scenes of the U.S. Army involving four or five thousand people and 200 trucks at San Antonio, Texas, and the scene of the girl clinging to the truck was done at Griffith Park near Glendale with about three trucks which we kept going around the camera. Renée Adorée was wonderful, I was mad about her. She was actually French, you know.

What about the casting of John Gilbert?

He was a star and in order to get him to do it they had presold the picture as one of a series of his 'star films'. I won't say I didn't object to him, but that was part of the deal. Then when the picture was finished and they saw what a big success it was they had to go around and cancel and buy out on those contracts where they had sold it as a starring picture. It became a big 'special' film, sort of put Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer on the map.

Did your attack on war arouse any criticism?

No. We were afraid *beforehand* that we would have trouble showing it, but strangely enough one of the Duponts—I'll never forget it—said, "I'll get you a big tent if you can't show it." Now Dupont was supposed to be a big war manufacturer, but I'd met this man and he said, "If you get in trouble with the film we'll supply a tent to show it in." He was just a visitor on the set. But the minute it was shown—I think the first showing we had was in San Diego, a sneak preview—it was just acknowledged right away that it was a big commercial success. This really put me on the map. There was no Academy Award at that time. Had we had Academy Awards I probably would have swept the whole field. But it was a



LEFT: ELEANOR BOARDMAN IN "THREE WISE FOOLS". RIGHT: VIDOR ON THE SET OF "STREET SCENE".

tremendous thing and as I said it also put M-G-M on the map. They wanted to sign me up, which they did. I signed up with them for a series of films, staying on there quite a while.

Did your version of LA BOHEME follow the libretto text very closely?

We worked more from Murger's original book. The music could have been played in the orchestra but it was impossible to buy the music: I think it always has been. But you could buy the book, it's in the public domain. So that was the situation. M-G-M has a print, in good condition.

How did you come to cast James Murray in THE CROWD?

The Crowd was an original story. I had a picture in mind, working on the story, of exactly the type of man it should be: sort of nondescript, not negative, but some place in between. I saw him as a fellow that you could like and with whom you'd be sympathetic, but not too aggressive, not too active. One day I was standing talking to a man on the M-G-M studio lot and a bunch of extras was going by, and one fellow—the others were passing around us—but one fellow said, "Excuse me," and walked between us, and I just saw the face and I said, "This is the fellow." He went on and I had to chase him and catch up with him just as he was getting on a bus, and I said, "What's your name?" and he told me—which I forgot quickly—and I said, "Will you come out tomorrow? I want to talk to you," and he said, "What's your name?" He didn't show up so we had to go through the list of extras that day, and finally when I saw the name Murray I realised that was the name he'd told me—James Murray, maybe he'd told me both names. We had to call him and then he didn't come, he didn't think it meant anything, and then we made a test by paying him as an extra. He had been a doorman in New York and later made a few other movies. I saw him when I made *Our Daily Bread* and I said, "I might have a part for you like you had," and he said, "What doing?" and I said, "Well you'll have to sober up first and get a lot of that beer fat off." And he said, "Oh, screw you, the hell with you," and that was it. He became an alcoholic and fell in the East River in New York, either pushed or fell. I did get a letter a few years ago saying that while clowning he slipped and fell in, while being drunk too, and that he was drowned.

How did you get the idea for THE CROWD?

From the approach I had to *The Big Parade*. My idea of *The Big Parade* was a man observing all these happenings with a subjective viewpoint entirely, and after *The Big Parade* was a success Thalberg said, "What are you going to do next? Any stories that can top this?" And I said there must be other stories with a man observing and he said, "What, for example?" and I said, "Life." So I had to go home and start writing out a story of a man observing life.

Was it entirely shot on location in New York?

Not entirely. But probably half of it. We shot all around New York, with hidden cameras too, which was way ahead of its time. I think this was the first time it was done. I even made two or three shots with a camera in a packing box. We shot most of them out of a truck with a flap down and a hole cut in the back, and nobody knew. I was probably influenced by the Germans on the sets, such films as *Variety*, *Metropolis*. We had very good art directors, Cedric Gibbons and Arnold Gillespie.

Was the film a tremendous success or not?

It was a tremendous critical success. The problem was that at that time the theatres were all very large. We had no art circuits, and this would have been an ideal art-house film. But not having big stars, and not having the advertising facilities that they do today such as television, it meant that the film played to theatres half filled with a lot of very enthusiastic people. It didn't actually lose money; I guess the budget would have been around \$325,000.

How did you get the idea for your all-Negro film, HALLELUJAH?

All the incidents are out of my youth and childhood. I lived in Texas, and I used to visit relatives in Arkansas, and we went around to all these religious meetings and baptisms and so forth, and I just strung them all together. That baptism sequence in the river—I'd seen one like that, a small one, in Arkansas. We staged it in Memphis, where I shot most of that picture, and went over into Arkansas for the swamp. We were actually in a swamp there and at that time—well it's still true—the sound equipment was immobile, it couldn't be used. But I was so anxious to do this film that we went ahead anyway and shot it silent. That gave us all the freedom of a silent picture and then we put the sound in later. If we'd been shooting in synchronised sound we couldn't have done all those travelling shots. We didn't even have a location truck.

Post-synching the film without movieolas and things of that kind was a madhouse. They had to run the thing in a projection room and we rigged up a push-button flashlight which we pressed to tell the operator to put a grease pencil mark on the film. Of course by the time you had pressed the button and the light went on he put his hand in four or five feet away. Oh it was maddening, maddening. We did a lot of close-ups back at the studio because of that. But we also had full shots that had no sound and trying to post-synch it was just dreadful. I think it hastened the process of the cutter's death.

Is it true that the girl—Nina Mae McKinney—was found in a dance hall?

No, she was a chorus girl in a New York musical revue



JAMES MURRAY AND ELEANOR BOARDMAN IN "THE CROWD".

called *Blackbirds* of 1928 or 1929. I was casting the film in Chicago, looked at many people, then went to New York looking at Negro performers in churches, theatres and dance halls and saw her in the chorus line. She had the looks for the part: sort of sexy, very pretty and attractive, not too black, *café au lait* skin. She was just a bubbling personality. Some of the Negro performers have it naturally. They're not much problem. The man was an understudy in *Show Boat*. I really wanted Paul Robeson for that part. I wrote the thing with Paul Robeson in mind.

Was HALLELUJAH a box-office hit?

Same sort of thing I said about *The Crowd*. It opened in two theatres in New York, one in Harlem and one downtown, and in selling it they had the obstacle of not wanting to attract a large percentage of Negro patrons into the theatre, and I had to go around personally and try to upset that. That was the problem. Some exhibitor would show it and then—very unusual in Chicago—we couldn't get the big theatre and so a fellow in a small theatre on a side street booked it and gave a dinner and black tie opening and it was filled from then on; and then the big theatre men, Balaban and Katz, ran it afterwards. But we always had to break the barrier like that. And the same thing in the South: I'd make a bet with a man that it would do as well as the picture that was showing there, and it got a showing, it did well. But it had this barrier—it was an erroneous one, because the people in the South were interested in Negroes as such and in their life—but they were afraid they would fill the theatre with Negroes, and they didn't want that. It didn't necessarily mean that it *would* attract only Negroes, but that was the problem they had. The Negroes themselves loved it. Whether they would today . . .

How did you achieve the realistic deglamorised look of BILLY THE KID?

I've always been interested in exterior scenery and in photography; I've always had the photographic eye. And this was the first 70 mm. film. So, knowing I had this wide screen, I said, "I'm going to go to the best places that you can find." I looked all over the West for isolated shots and spent a day at the Grand Canyon and Zion Park trying to duplicate the feeling of New Mexico, the place where it happened. I had a lot of old photographs—it's a true story—and deliberately copied them in the film. Most Western pictures use existing streets, but we didn't use any. Because of the wide screen, which seemed to accentuate the photography, I tried to make it unusual. But they withdrew the wide-screen version because of the extra expense: they were still paying for sound equipment, and the Fox and M-G-M executives (Fox was making a wide-screen picture about the same time) got together and put it away.

I followed the character of Billy the Kid as closely as I could. They had this football player Johnny Mack Brown under contract, and after three years of trying to do something with him they finally said to me, "If you'll use him in the lead we'll let you do the film." But it should have had a tough young kid—Jimmy Dean, a young Cagney or something. I more or less stylised the clothes, put him all in black, although the only existing photographs of Billy the Kid are of course rather funny-looking old tin-types. But it wasn't good casting on my part: he wasn't incisive enough, wasn't sharp enough. Wallace Beery I didn't particularly want but he had enough individuality, enough personality to dominate the character of the sheriff and that turned out well. But generally speaking I wasn't too enthusiastic about the casting; in fact I don't have any desire even to run it because the concessions to the casting are too bad. I haven't seen it since it was made.

Do you regard STREET SCENE as just a straightforward version of the play?

That was a pure experiment. I didn't want to spoil the stage play by going off the street, into interiors or away from the front of the house. I wanted to preserve the purity of the play, but I wasn't sure that you could do this and not have what used to be called action. So I had the idea of doing it by change of camera set-up, by change of composition: the composition became the action. We had a street built on the Goldwyn lot and didn't leave it except for one scene inside a taxi cab. It was a challenge. You know, the crime of the early days of sound was that they thought you had to do stage plays and photograph them just as they were: this practically set movies back twenty years, I suppose. So *Street Scene*, which was a one-set play, could have been made a terribly dull thing by uninteresting camera angles. That was what we had to get away from, that was the challenge, and it worked, it became successful.

OUR DAILY BREAD is a film which must be very close to you?

Yes. It was done in Depression times. I read a little article on co-operation and co-op living which spurred me on to that. I also saw it as the Wheat segment of the Wheat and Steel and War trilogy I spoke of at the time of *The Big Parade*. I borrowed money on just about everything I had in order to do it. Thalberg said he liked it, but he couldn't do it in the studio, so I ended up borrowing all the money myself and just broke even. It was shot out Sacramento Valley way.

It's interesting that the earth is a recurring theme in my films. I do have an intense feeling for the earth, for rural life—and photographically, too. I used to have a map of the United States and I'd put in little marks or pins of where I'd done pictures. I looked at the U.S. as one might look at the world: you have African people there, and you have Russian people there, and I was always interested in the way New England people lived, Southern people lived, Western people lived. *The Wedding Night*, for instance, is about Connecticut tobacco farms, *The Stranger's Return* about Iowa. Originally I was interested in the Middle West, Indiana, Illinois, all those states: the centre of America and American life.

Was NORTHWEST PASSAGE intended originally as a much longer affair of which you only did the first half?

That's right. The second part was never made because of the producers' lack of courage. In the first part Rogers (of Rogers' Rangers) was a tremendous hero, but the second part showed his disintegration, and I guess they feared audiences of that time wouldn't accept that. Anyhow we kept enlarging the first half so much that it became a full-length picture, and it was always anticipated that I would continue on to do the second part: we even kept the actors on salary for a couple of weeks. But that became a myth and someone else—Conway, I think—shot the ending on it. That was in New York. The producer called me up and asked if it was all right. I was so disheartened that we weren't going on with the whole film that I said, "Go ahead and shoot it."

Spencer Tracy had a doctor and a masseur: we were taking good care of *him*, wouldn't let *him* stand in the water too long. But the extras and most of the crew stood in the water all day. We shot it at Lake Payette, near Boise, Idaho. The only thing we faked was to have lighter boats for dragging and heavier ones for actually using, but there were no backdrops

or process shots. I sent the extras in the river only up to about their waists; any further would have been dangerous, and you couldn't take a chance on losing someone. For the scenes in the centre of the river we used the tank on the studio backlot, which had a safety device on it.

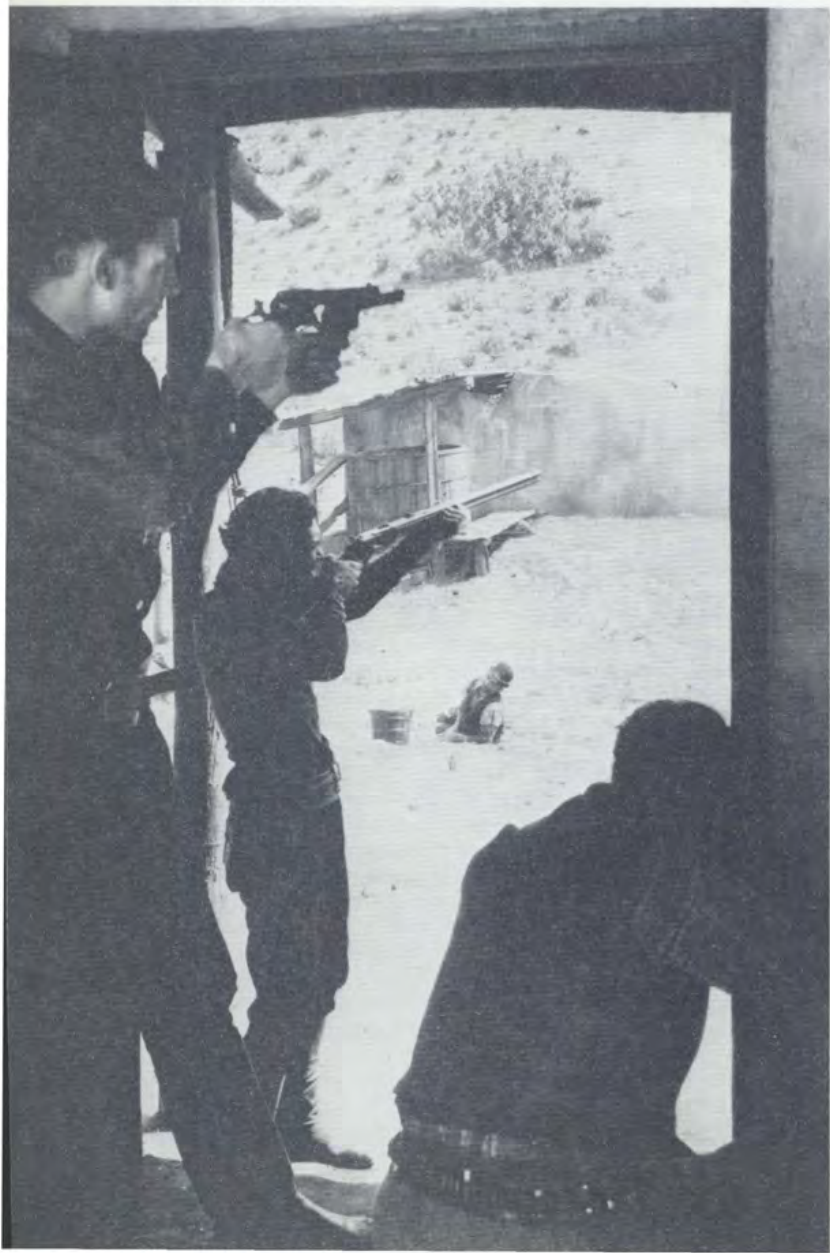
H. M. PULHAM ESQ.—*did that interest you at all?*

Very much. I made it with the idea of developing new experimental techniques. I used direct cutting between scenes, for example, without fades or dissolves, and instead of an insert of a letter I used the letter-writer's voice. I noticed in a recent picture, *Two for the Road*, that the automobile with the two people would go down the road and then the people would come walking in. Now I used that in *Street Scene*: as people went out the other characters would come in and the camera would come back with them. The putting together of sequences in *Pulham* has a lot of this sort of thing, going to some point that gets you into the next moment, the next part of the film.

AN AMERICAN ROMANCE?

That's the Steel, the metal segment of that trilogy. I actually wrote that picture for Spencer Tracy. At one time the studio promised me Tracy, Ingrid Bergman and Joe Cotten. But someone else came in and took the others over and I wasn't enough politician to be up front at the lunchroom and I got secondary casting. This project was a big love of mine for many years. I had many ideas: from the earth up into the air—lift—and doing it by colour, by the development and use of colour. And then it was the earth, the heavy earth, iron ore, getting more refined, more refined, until it finally flew into the sky as an airplane, you see, and only up, and it was all of

"BILLY THE KID".



America: we started in New York and ended in California and used most of the states right across America.

But the picture was spoiled for me by Brian Donlevy and by the girl (Ann Richards), who was not very exciting, and by the cutting. I took a lot out of it, and then the studio cut it against my wishes, taking out things that I didn't think should be cut and leaving in things that *could* have been cut. Also, to avoid re-dubbing and re-doing the music, they cut by where the music ended, and that was just ruinous. The other thing was, I had it very heavy on the documentary side, and when I went out on the road with it in the Middle West I discovered that we should keep all the human story and cut down more on the documentary story. But in the cutting they did the reverse: they cut the human story and kept all the documentary stuff. So that's when I left M-G-M and never went back.

Who were the other directors who are said to have done work on DUEL IN THE SUN?

William Dieterle did some, and Otto Brower, and Sidney Franklin did a couple of days, even William Cameron Menzies did one or two days. They were not with the cast principally. This is normal, to have second units, provided they talk with the director who has planned the scenes. Franklin was good with animals, and another fellow was good with action, so you let them do it, but you got together with them and drew a lot of little diagrams of how it was going. Selznick was a great one for second units spread all over the place because they could take more time and wouldn't hold up the cast.

At the end of the film, two days before we finished, Selznick and I had an argument and I quit. That's when I think he had Menzies. Then the film turned out bigger than he thought it was going to be so he called in Dieterle for additional scenes. They reshot a few sequences and then we never could tell which were his and which were mine. Dieterle did shoot the train wreck and the very opening, the dance in a big Mexican saloon with Tilly Losch. I opened with a man in jail* or something, right afterwards. We didn't have this big spectacular opening in the original script; it was Selznick's idea to open in a big way, to add all that bigness. In fact I started the picture as an intense, *High Noon* type of thing. He got me to run *Gone with the Wind* some time during the shooting and said he conceived blowing this picture up like *Gone with the Wind*.

What was your point of difference with Selznick that made you leave the picture?

An argument over the film being behind schedule. His production man had given the camera and crew to somebody else so we couldn't do the thing I'd rehearsed. He came out and made a big scene: "What's the matter?" he said. "Why aren't you shooting, it's horrible, etc." I told him to quit blowing off until he found out what was causing it and he persisted, so I said, "Apparently you want to direct the picture," and I gave him the microphone. We were out on location with—oh, we had the cavalry, we had the railroad, we had everything. I'd told him, "If you do it three times I'm going to leave." So I left, and he said, "Come back," but I didn't. I'd had enough by then. It was two days to the end and I was pretty tired.

Then he had Dieterle, and finally the Directors Guild had a committee to adjudicate on credit for the film. I sat with them and so did the cutter and we ran the picture and found other people had done maybe five, eight, ten per cent. It was hard to decide because we had shot some scenes and they had reshot them in the same identical way with the same dialogue.

What about von Sternberg's contribution to the picture?

Selznick thought he might be able to do something with Jennifer in the way of tests, or do something with clothes, and he had him on to suggest lighting. He's a terribly likeable fellow and Selznick, I think, wanted to do something for him and I did too. So we just kept him on and he helped in any way he could, looking for a location or interviewing an actor or maybe he might have said, "It'd be good if you had

*Herbert Marshall's farewell to his daughter, played by Jennifer Jones.

Jennifer's hair hanging there," or something. One night I had to leave and I let him shoot one scene that I had already rehearsed, of a sheriff (Charles Dingle) coming in the patio looking for someone, going through and opening doors. And he went back to his old form of shooting many takes.

Why were there three cameramen on the picture?

We had a strike in the middle of it and had to stop work for something like three to six weeks. Harold Rosson was on in the beginning and when we went back to work again we had Lee Garmes; Rosson was probably on another film by then. All those sunset effects were done by the Technicolor man, Ray Rennahan. Selznick thought in grandiose terms; he had no sense of economy. The more cameramen he could get, the more second units he could get, the better he liked it. He would also rewrite sometimes without any apparent reason. Then he would come and have a meeting with me about running over schedule. But *he* was the one going over schedule, *he* was the writer, *he* was the producer. You can't be on schedule if you're asked to re-shoot a scene you'd done already that day with a slight difference, just to please him.

How did you overcome the problem of shooting directly into the sun in the final sequence?

I guess it was inspired by Orson's *Citizen Kane* which had spots shining right into the camera. The whole idea of that was to accentuate the heat: the heat on the rocks and the heat on the desert and the heat she was going through. It was hot, too. For days we were on this pile of jagged rocks about twelve miles from Tucson: I think Jennifer Jones still has scars on her legs from it.

And THE FOUNTAINHEAD?

I liked the film but hated the ending. I thought it was ridiculous to have a fellow blow up a building because they changed some of the façade. I went to Jack Warner and said, "If you make a cut in this picture and I burn it are you going to forgive me?" and he said, "Well, we won't but the judge might." I didn't think that Cooper was well cast but he was cast before I was. I thought it should have been someone like Bogart, a more arrogant type of man. But after I forgot all that and saw it several years later I accepted Cooper doing it. Pat Neal I thought marvellous, splendid. I liked her tremendously.

Ayn Rand had a deal whereby they couldn't change her script without her consent. She's a very determined person. She knows exactly what she wants and is not easily persuaded. When actors wanted to change lines we had to telephone her and ask her to come over quickly and that helped stop a lot of actors changing lines; which was a benefit, I think, to the director. We'd had writers before her but they had spoiled the book and I thought it was good to keep to the book as much as possible.

Did you personally agree with the philosophy Ayn Rand was putting forward in her book and in her screenplay?

Not to the point of arrogance. I do believe firmly that all inspiration, our life and everything, comes to us directly, rather than having to go through any institutional or orthodox channels, and to this degree I believe that I'm in direct communication with God or whatever you want to call it. So it was compatible with what I believe.

How did you achieve technically the ambulance scene in New York and the final scene?

The interior of the ambulance with the moving shots of the red cross was process. For the final thing in New York we had a helicopter make a process background. Then we had the camera way up high on the stage and the projection machine at an angle: quite a difficult technical thing. The cage with people in it went past on a cable.

In *The Crowd* we went up a building to a certain window and went in the window. Arnold Gillespie's staff had to build a whole miniature lying down and then have a bridge with a camera on it roll up this miniature building, which was about 30 feet long. Today you would have a zoom lens and it would be nothing.

What did you think of BEYOND THE FOREST?

Not too much. It has a certain atmosphere about it but I don't think much of it, for some reason or other. Still, I liked it a little better than *Lightning Strikes Twice*.

How much control did you have over Bette Davis' performance?

I had one or two run-ins with her, to the point where she tried to have me taken off the picture. But she didn't succeed. (They didn't tell me this until after the picture was over.) They were terribly minor things. She's a pro, and she usually came and gave a good performance, but you might say something that affected her without knowing it; she was terribly touchy.

What I did like in the picture was the ending with Bette Davis going towards the train, and the shooting scenes in the woods near Lake Tahoe.

RUBY GENTRY?

Here the atmosphere predominates in my mind, and the Southern intensity. It's a little like a Tennessee Williams type of story. It has that characteristic mental heat of the South, and I thought Jennifer was very good in it. That scene of the drive into the sea with the automobile was done at Pismo Beach, on the way to San Francisco. I added that to the script because in Texas, where I lived, this used to happen all the time. Kids would drive out and sit and look at the moon and have a love scene, and then the tide would come up and when they got ready to move the car it wouldn't move.

WAR AND PEACE was of course a huge project, a major project?

Yes. I loved *War and Peace*, I thought we got great results. I wish I'd had Peter Ustinov playing Henry Fonda's part. I looked at Paul Scofield too. Fonda was better than Scofield would have been but I think Ustinov would have been great. I never considered anyone else for Natasha but Audrey Hepburn.

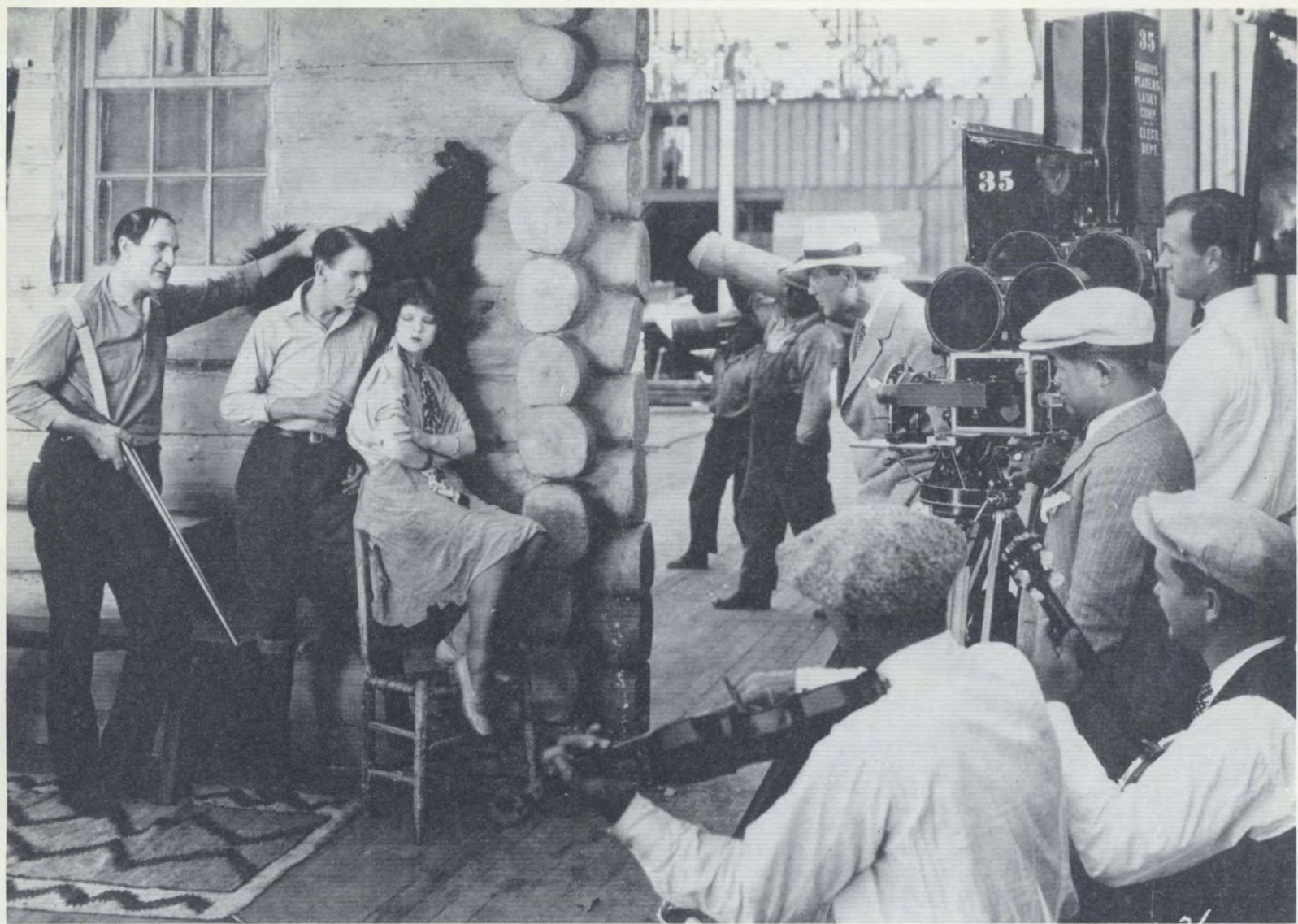
The art director on *War and Peace* is probably the best I've ever worked with, the assistant director—who has since been killed—was as good as I've had any place, and the rest of the crew, mostly Italian—the costume design, co-ordinated with the art direction—was better than I've ever experienced here, and I really was inspired. Of course it's a great book, it's easy to be inspired by the book. I thought we got its atmosphere. The new Russian version is supposed to be eight hours long, but with an unlimited budget it's a different story. My *War and Peace* ran six months in Moscow, so they must have liked it.

Why were the opening scenes of SOLOMON AND SHEBA so much better than the rest of it?

That's a peculiar thing, it shows you what a cast can do. I did half the picture with Tyrone Power and we thought that when we were doing the film *with him* it was going to be a simply marvellous picture, because he was able to do this vacillation thing between sex and religion, sex and state obligation, so well. He came to me a couple of times and said, "You know, this is the best part I've ever done, the best picture I've ever been in." We thought so too when we ran the rushes. When Brynner came in he was cautious and diffident following Power, and because of the fact that Power had died on it, it turned into an unimportant, nothing sort of picture. It's strange. I guess the unreality, the phoniness—whatever it is—comes out unless you have a very sincere performance by the leading character. We had two months of film with Tyrone Power and I think it would be terribly interesting to run this because he was doing such a good job. It's strange that of all the pictures I've made this one is spoken of least.

What have you been doing since then?

I've written two scripts, one on the life of Cervantes on which I worked for a year, and one on the life of Mary Baker Eddy. I've also done an experimental 25-minute 16 mm. film called *Truth and Illusion: An Introduction to Metaphysics*. I did the photography myself. The experiment is to see if you can take philosophical thoughts or ideas and photograph them using existing objects or nature. I simply wrote a narration and then challenged myself to see what I could photograph. It tries to pose the question, What is truth and what's illusion? It has obvious bearings on movies that don't really move, and then it gets into philosophical metaphysics. I haven't done anything with it except show it wherever it has been requested. Every time I run it I see about half a dozen to a dozen scenes that I'd like to replace.



20s



The 'It' Girl

ALTHOUGH THEY WERE NOT the best or (having to compete with Gloria Swanson, Marion Davies and, briefly, Beatrice Lillie) the funniest actresses of their enchanted generation, the girl goddesses who seem most exactly to epitomise the spirit of young America in the Twenties are indisputably Joan Crawford and Clara Bow. Crawford was singularly beautiful and graceful and vital and peculiarly tense. When, as Wild Diana in *Our Dancing Daughters*, she ecstatically hugs herself, and bursts out (as it seems, involuntarily), "Oh!—It feels so good—just to be alive," she still communicates all the optimism and poignancy of America between the disasters of war and the catastrophe of the Wall Street crash.

She and Bow fitted perfectly a character which is recurrent in the films of the later Twenties—the flapper, the wild party girl, the inheritor of post-war woman's emancipation, an emancipation which was not simply political but involved equally liberation from demanding Victorian domestic habits and from Victorian moral restraints. "Mother, it's done," says one of the girls in *This Side of Paradise* (though it could as well have been Joan or Clara), "You can't run everything the way you did—in the Nineties." The films always take much the same form. The girl's parents and her young man are alarmed and shocked by her recklessness and wildness and independence. She seems not to care what she says or where she goes or what she does or with whom she does it. But when she is put to the ultimate test, the Modern Girl reveals resources of honesty and strength and decency and a capacity for self-sacrifice and courage quite unknown to her meeker sisters.

Thus Wild Diana, Betty Lou (Bow) in *It*, Stella in *The Wild Party* and Prudence Severn in *My Lady of Whims*. Even *The Green Hat* turned out this way when it arrived on the screen as *A Woman of Affairs* with Garbo as Diana Merrick, who in the end sacrifices her life rather than compromise the marriage of the man she loves and who loves her, despite separation and misunderstanding. The character

SHOW PEOPLE

"We didn't need dialogue. We had faces," cried Norma Desmond. And they did. Some enigmatically beautiful, like Evelyn Brent and Louise Brooks; some sharp and splendid, like Crawford and Swanson; some naughty but nice, like Helen Chandler and Clara Bow; some—Marion Davies, Lillian Gish—nice but naughty. And all of them, to quote Norma Desmond again, still wonderful.

This article is a small homage to some of those faces as they shone briefly and brilliantly, disinterred from the vaults in half-forgotten films, in the National Film Theatre's recent season, "The 20s: How They Roared."

and the films reveal a touching determination to vindicate the new girl and her new, liberated morality.

You are just a carefree child;
You are really not so wild—
My Wild Party Girl

says the theme song from *The Wild Party*.

The men in these films are invariably utter fools; and their obtuseness and selfishness only set off the wit and vivacity and beauty of the goddesses. The hero of *It* abandons Clara after seeing her with a baby in her arms (she claims it as her own to oblige a friend over some formality about the rent). The hero of *My Lady of Whims* is hired by Clara's parents to spy on her life in Greenwich Village bohemia (where, admittedly, she is accepting yachts from a rich old gentleman whose only demand on her is that she should call him 'Daddy'). His admonitions are almost as stuffy as Fredric March's lecture on the responsibilities of the emancipated woman in *The Wild Party*. "So this is Freedom!" he sneers, seeing her life in an artist's studio and at rackets but not too indecorous parties. "How dreadful your life at home must have been to leave it for this!"—which provokes Clara to a spirited defence of her abandoned home and parents.

Clara is really more believable as the go-getting shopgirl who sets her cap at the boss in *It* and threatens, when a potential rival comes in sight, "I'll soon take the snap out of her garters." Perhaps because her own life was the Twenties' success story of a poor girl who made it to Hollywood via a beauty contest at the age of 17. She had already established herself as a star when cunning Elinor Glyn perceived in the fellow redhead the embodiment of 'It'. Seeing *My Lady of Whims*, or even Clara's supporting performance as Kittens Westcourt in *Dancing Mothers*, you feel pretty certain that it did not really need Glyn and 'it' to launch Bow as the sex phenomenon of the age, though they probably speeded the process.

She was dazzlingly attractive, with her huge, magnificent eyes, the mass of red hair that photographed dark, and the slim, childlike and yet quintessentially sexual figure. She still appears astonishingly and very positively sexy. Harlow undoubtedly learned a lot from her, but Harlow was never as good. Clara's intentions were never veiled. Setting eyes on the male of her choice, she narrows her eyes and gives a slight, contemplative pucker to her brow before setting off into action with a brief, admiring exclamation of "Hot socks!" Her pout is anticipation of kisses. And she was the first actress who, finding herself in proximity to an eligible man, would let her hips sag forward in a gesture of unconscious (maybe) but unequivocal invitation. Alexander Walker, in his excellent essay on Clara Bow, noted that "her highly individual way of projecting sexiness was by touch: she was always touching her man lightly and fleetingly . . ."

Her costumes seem nowadays daringly provocative. In *The Wild Party* Dorothy Arzner manages to get her in a good deal of undress: it is small wonder that her appearance in a roadhouse, wearing only a sort of jazz-modern bikini under a mink, arouses some randy bystanders to attempted rape. In *My Lady of Whims*, though she does not quite fulfil the promise implied in her advice, "Don't wear your earmuffs. Remember the less worn the soonest mended," she does appear at a fancy dress ball in a pretty striking costume, clinging and flimsy about the breasts, the nipples neatly marked out by cats' eyes. She did not need such obvious aids to eroticism: in *Mantrap* she wears a plain shirt and elastic-topped skirt. But when she stretches the elastic top to tuck in the shirt (as when she pulls up her constantly slipping stockings) the gesture conveys an extraordinary sexiness.

An important factor in the sexual fascination of the Twenties girls, however, is their ultimate impregnability. Let a fellow get too fresh with Clara and he will end up with a smart sock on the jaw. The mixture of sex kitten and militant

STILLS ON OPPOSITE PAGE. ABOVE: "MANTRAP", ERNEST TORRENCE, PERCY MARMONT, CLARA BOW; DIRECTOR VICTOR FLEMING IN STRAW HAT. LEFT: RAOUL WALSH AND GLORIA SWANSON IN "SADIE THOMPSON". RIGHT: POLLY MORAN, MARION DAVIES AND WILLIAM HAINES IN "SHOW PEOPLE".



CLARA BOW AND ANTONIO MORENO IN "IT".

virgin is as always specially potent. Perhaps it was this erotic mixture of promise and retraction that prompted Anita Loos' unperceptive comment—mean even for her—that Clara Bow “succeeded in being at one and the same time innocuous and trashy.” Certainly it was a factor in the validity of the odd character Clara plays in *Mantrap* (after Sinclair Lewis): the little Minnesota manicurist who marries a backwoods man and manages to remain comparatively faithful to her unromantic husband while outrageously flirting with any man in sight.

But there was more than sex alone to Clara Bow. She was a capable and charming actress and comedian—and remained so after talking pictures. The story that her voice was bad is quite clearly belied by *The Wild Party*. It is exactly the voice you would expect, light, bright and with a pretty touch of Brooklyn. When the whole class of girls is baiting the new Anthropology Professor, it is still Clara you watch all the time. She was perhaps never funnier than in the scene in *It* where, as the poor but saucy shopgirl, she is taken to the Ritz and weathers a fearful series of social embarrassments (thereby attracting the admiration of Madame Glyn who is dining, monumentally and conveniently, at a neighbouring table).

Beautiful, restless, aggressively young and alive, Clara Bow supremely expressed the Twenties; and her career did not really survive them. At the height of her success little scandals such as cases for the alienation of other men's affections from their lawful wives only seemed to add to her fascination. A gambling scandal in which she was involved with Will Rogers did her less good. The dizzy girl took no notice of the stakes on the chips and found that she had written I.O.U.s for more than she possessed. But Paramount were glad to raise her salary and she eventually paid her way out of that one. Her career was seriously checked, however, when she charged her secretary Daisy De Voe with embezzlement and Daisy hit back with talk of drugs and drink and worse: Apart from an unsuccessful attempt at a comeback with a couple of films in 1932-33, after 1931 Clara withdrew into private life. Her husband, the cowboy star Rex Bell, was at one time Governor of Nevada. They had two sons.

After her retirement the nervous vitality which had made her so enchanting as an actress came to torment her. Her delightful restlessness became a disease. She had long spells in

mental hospitals and remained a chronic insomniac. When she died of a heart attack three years ago, she was sitting up in bed, watching television. Louella Parsons used to say that she received a Christmas card from Clara every year, on which she would always write in a rather shaky hand, “Do you still remember me?”

DAVID ROBINSON

DAVIES

TWO YEARS AGO at a Venice Festival retrospective, I saw my first Marion Davies film—it was either *Show People* or *The Patsy*—and was duly astonished. Could this enchanting comedienne, who cheerfully sent up everybody from Lillian Gish and Gloria Swanson to Marion Davies herself, possibly be the model for Susan Alexander, that archetypal product of the casting-couch for whom *Citizen Kane* so desperately tried to buy stardom as an opera singer?

Well, she could and she couldn't. In his autobiography, King Vidor has described the birth-pangs of *Show People*, shedding a good deal of light on her problematic career. The film was to be a burlesque, more or less, of Gloria Swanson's rise from the slapstick ranks of Mack Sennett bathing beauties to enthronement as a dramatic actress and as the Marquise de la Falaise de la Coudray. A key scene would have Peggy Pepper, aspiring Southern belle soon to be metamorphosed into Patricia Peppore, turn up for her first day at the studio bent on wringing more tears with her histrionics than both Gishes put together, and instead receive a custard pie slap in the face. Marion Davies loved the idea. William Randolph Hearst, unfortunately, objected to the indignity to be inflicted on his beloved, and Mr. Hearst's word was law. So Peggy Pepper is sprayed, equally effectively but apparently more classily, with a soda siphon.

No doubt Hearst was bewitched by that demure china doll face with its appealing blue eyes and halo of golden hair (but how could he have missed the mischievous grin and that upper lip which could curl into the most devastating Brer Rabbit parody of the rosebud pout which was all the rage?). At any rate, for several years after they met in 1917 when she was a chorus girl in New York and he a multi-millionaire tycoon

and newspaper proprietor, he spent a fortune financing her pictures and promoting them in his papers in an attempt to buy her stardom as a winsome young romantic maiden. From her 1918 debut in *Runaway Romany*, through fifteen or sixteen pictures to 1922, she appears to have had only one real box-office success, as Mary Tudor in *When Knighthood was in Flower*, the film which did finally establish her as a star. Meanwhile, the sweet young maiden longed to play hard-boiled blondes and comedy.

As prints of so few of these early films have survived, it is difficult to say whether critics and public were right in cold-shouldering Hearst's creation. The most one can say is that in *The Belle of New York* (1919), where she tinkled tambourines and dispensed forgiveness with the best of them as a Salvation Army lass saving souls amid the squalor of the New York beer parlours, she is the only thing worth watching in a creaky melodrama: her exquisite beauty shines through soulfully, and she acts with a restraint and repose rare at the time.

Gradually, however, things changed. By 1927, she was fast earning a new reputation as a comedienne with *The Red Mill* (directed by Roscoe Arbuckle under his pseudonym of William Goodrich: one up to Hearst for employing him after the scandal), *Tillie the Toiler*, *The Fair Co-Ed* and *Quality Street*. And 1928 was the *annus mirabilis* which matched her talent for the first time with a director—King Vidor—who obviously understood it and could use it to the full. In *The Patsy*, a warm and deliciously funny Cinderella story in which she gets the better of her spoiled elder sister by emerging outrageously as a fully-fledged flapper, she proves that she could snap her garters as gaily as Clara Bow and do fearsomely exact parodies of Gish, Mae Murray and Pola Negri. In *Show People*, she mercilessly flays the pretensions of Hollywood glamour queens with languorous poses in love scenes opposite an effete and greasy leading man, and wavering attempts to keep her nose from twitching as her lip curls to the regulation cupid's bow sneer; she cheerfully mocks America's sweetheart with her frolicsome entry in sunbonnet, ringlets and frilly print dress to make a coy display of her dramatic abilities to a startled clerk in the casting office; and she reveals that she was second not even to Gloria Swanson in her mastery of slapstick, or Beatrice Lillie in her gift for innuendo by raised eyebrow. The screen test sequence, in which she subtly mismanages all her emotions and expressions, sub-vocalises like mad when given a letter supposedly containing news of her stricken lover, and—after barely managing to produce a furrowed forehead for the heartbreak—dissolves into floods of tears for the comedy bit, is a superb example of comic timing.

Doubtless it was Hearst's influence which turned *Show People* into Who's Who at M-G-M, with Chaplin making a charming unbilled appearance as an autograph-hunting Charlie, John Gilbert turning up to be briefly adored, Lew Cody and Elinor Glyn sauntering by, and Douglas Fairbanks, William S. Hart and George K. Arthur clowning in the commissary. Doubtless it was King Vidor who turned it into what is now a fascinating documentary on Hollywood studio methods, with detailed backstage scenes, intriguing glimpses of the shooting of a slapstick chase, amiable satire on the star system (the leading man shuddering with revulsion as he is splashed with a bucket of water after supposedly diving to the rescue in a lake) and many in-jokes (Vidor's own *Bardelys the Magnificent* is the 'art film' which Peggy Pepper drools over, and on which slapstick star Billy Boone pours so much scorn). But the engaging, offbeat charm belongs to Marion Davies alone.

She was obviously besotted with Hollywood, and she had, endearingly, no false illusions about herself, despite the Hearst millions behind her, despite the fact that she owned her own producing company, despite the fact that she was the first star to own her own mobile dressing-room complete with special carpet for alighting. In *Show People*, as Peggy Pepper goes to the studio for her screen test, she passes a laughing, nondescript girl swinging a tennis racket. "Who's that?" she asks. Told "That's Marion Davies," she makes a pretty moue of disgust. In *Cain and Mabel*, playing opposite Clark Gable in 1936, she is a waitress who becomes a Broadway dancing star. She

prances through some clever numbers staged by Bobby Connolly and directed by Lloyd Bacon; typically, however, she makes no bones about casting doubts on her own competence. "There's something you ought to know. Aunt Mimi was right when she said she taught me all she knew about dancing. But as she's got flat feet, I think it might show up in my work."

In 1937, after making *Ever Since Eve* with Robert Montgomery, Marion Davies retired from Hollywood, and lived with Hearst until his death in 1951. She herself died in 1961 of cancer. Life in Hearst's fantastic castle of San Simeon was not at all what it was in Xanadu. True, Marion Davies pored over huge, endless jigsaw puzzles, but because she loved them, not because she was a disenchanted Susan Alexander; she became Hollywood's gayest hostess. As Colleen Moore wrote: "During dinner Marion would do imitations of people for Mr. Hearst, making him break with laughter. Or if not imitations, something else. She always seemed to have some stunt to amuse him. Looking at them made me think of Louis XV and Madame Du Barry. In fact, the whole place resembled a court of long ago."

At one time, Hearst spread his protégée's name around with such wild abandon that people had, inevitably, to react violently. "Marion Davies became the target of many jokes. There was Beatrice Lillie's remark when someone showed her the clustered lights of Los Angeles. 'How wonderful!' said Beatrice. 'I suppose later they all merge and spell Marion Davies!'" (Chaplin: *My Autobiography*.) What, one wonders, would have been the story had the talent which shines through *The Patsy* and *Show People* (and how many other films still mouldering in the vaults) been allowed to make its own unforced way?

TOM MILNE

I am most grateful to Philip Jenkinson for help and advice with this article.—T.M.

SWANSON

TO MEET GLORIA SWANSON, with one's ideas formed almost entirely by *Sunset Boulevard*, is rather unnerving. Preparing to look up, at a statuesque queen of high drama, you find yourself instead looking down into the great eau-de-nil saucer eyes of a tiny, mischievous, elfin figure whose functional connection with the searing dramas of the world must surely be minimal. Of course, nobody is naive enough to suppose that Norma Desmond and Gloria Swanson are or

MARION DAVIES IN "SHOW PEOPLE".





GLORIA SWANSON IN "MANHANDLED".

could be one and the same person, sharing the fictional character's pathetic obsessions, her self-deceiving removal from realities. And yet somehow something tends to have rubbed off: it is comforting, but it is also unexpected, to find that Gloria Swanson in reality lives very much here and now, is an eminently practical businesswoman, and looks back on those far-off days of silent glory with a quizzical, not-too-nostalgic interest, as though it was all something which happened to somebody else.

All this would not, I think, be so surprising if we knew better the films which originally made her one of the greatest stars of the silent screen. The prime mischief the Norma Desmond image has done by attaching itself to Gloria Swanson is that it makes people assume that Gloria Swanson must in her silent heyday have been a tragedy queen too. The idea is encouraged, on the whole, by the fact that virtually the only one of her silent films that everybody knows something about (because it is virtually the only one made by a director who still rates) is *Queen Kelly*. And the image of *Queen Kelly*—for even today few of the people who know something about it have actually seen it—is of dark dramatic perversity in the best Stroheim manner. Of course, to an extent that is true. But remarkably little of it affects the character played by Gloria Swanson, the convent-bred innocent who becomes the unfortunate object of 'Wild' Wolfram's ill-fated attentions. It is only when, towards the end of the film as we now have it, Patricia Kelly comes face to face with the fury of her rival in love, the terrible Queen, that heavy drama takes over. Up to then all is girlish innocence under the apple-blossoms, or it is tomboyish comedy.

For what we tend to forget is that Gloria Swanson was first, foremost, and most splendidly, a comedienne. The quintessentially characteristic scene in *Queen Kelly* is that of her first meeting with the Prince, when she is out taking a staid country walk with a crocodile of convent girls, the Prince stops to observe them, and Kelly is unfortunate enough, at that precise moment, to lose her knickers. Finding the Prince laughing, and the wretched things bunched inescapably about her ankles, she does what any girl of spirit would: snatches them off and throws them in the face of her mocker. Actually, Gloria Swanson seems to have made rather a speciality of losing her knickers on screen (which one can hardly conceive Norma Desmond doing): she does so, for instance, in *Manhandled*—not, perhaps one should add,

as a result of being manhandled, but simply through allowing her vicarious participation in a demonstration dance at a party to take rather too active a form. There her reaction to the realisation of her situation, conveyed a little brusquely by a girl-friend, is a deft cover-up operation, the effect of which is alas somewhat spoiled by her tripping over the head of a tiger-skin rug while beating a hasty retreat and thereby diverting the company with an exquisitely executed prat-fall.

Manhandled, as it happens, is a perfect example of her comic art in full flower. In it, she is a tough and rather saucy, but with it good-natured and virtuous, shop-girl in the bargain-basement of a New York store. While her boyfriend is off for a few days making his fortune in Detroit, she decides that she too can better herself, by becoming a party-girl ("Always keep them guessing about that goodnight"), posing, decorously clad, for a sculptor, and pouring tea, disguised as an impenetrably lofty Russian aristocrat, in a smart tea-room. Each phase of her brief career in smart society ends with propositions, and honour all but gone; inevitably the boy-friend misunderstands, but only for about five seconds flat, before Gloria's prayers make the scales drop from his eyes. And meanwhile, the film is terribly funny. As always, Gloria is at her best playing the girl who has fought for everything she has got, can look after herself, by fair means and foul, and is not going to take any nonsense from anyone. The opening sequence, in which she is mercilessly battered, and batters right back, on her way home in an overcrowded subway, sets the tone to perfection. Later on we see her dealing with awkward customers in the sales, brazenly entertaining a roomful of strangers with her humorous impersonations, or carrying off unflappably a meeting at the tea-room with a customer who insists on speaking Russian to her—she is toughly sympathetic, she gets us on her side, laughing with her, not at her, and above all she refuses all appeal to pathos in her comedy.

But for that, one would be tempted to see her as a sort of female Chaplin. Her methods are similar, even her stature and appearance (as is evident from her stunning imitation of Chaplin in *Sunset Boulevard*). There is, indeed, a persistent story that Chaplin once considered her as his regular leading lady, but decided against her because of their physical similarities. Theodore Huff says so in his book on Chaplin, and maybe got it from Chaplin himself; but if so Gloria Swanson says she knew nothing about it, though she did once play a bit with Chaplin in *His New Job*, her role consisting mainly of having her behind kicked rather more spiritedly than she liked. No doubt, had things been otherwise, she could and would have given as good as she got; and maybe Chaplin's comedy would have taken a different turn if he had equipped himself with a rival female underdog to kick him right back whenever he looked like getting too *Pagliacci* for comfort.

Still, it was not to be. For Gloria at that time the way ahead lay via a period as a Mack Sennett bathing beauty to discovery by De Mille and a star role in *Male and Female*, his version of *The Admirable Crichton* (in which she is at her best being petulant on the island and worst making "the great sacrifice which can perfume a whole life"). Then the comedies, and a version of *Rain* which if not, in the last analysis, quite so funny as Joan Crawford's, at least makes it clear that when Gloria Swanson gets laughs out of Sadie Thompson she means to. Seen in the proper perspective of Gloria Swanson's own career, her performance in *Sunset Boulevard* becomes even more remarkable than one might have thought, as precisely that: a performance without previous parallel in either her life or her work. Sad that it has had so few successors. Apparently another Italian-made film is now on its way to us. But meanwhile we can cherish Gloria Swanson's last screen appearance, as Agrippina in that silly but amiable romp *Nero's Big Weekend*.¹ When she arrives dripping on the doorstep in the midst of one of her son's jollier orgies, casually announcing that she has swum the Bay of Baiae just to get there, no one could doubt that Gloria Swanson is, when she wants to be, a very funny lady indeed. But then, she always was.

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

FILM REVIEWS

HOUR OF THE WOLF

"TURN SOULS inside out," observes the psychiatrist to the artist who is grimly striving to avoid him, "and what do I see? But you'd know, of course—you and your self-portraits." The only reply he gets is a punch on the nose (which, scientific detachment being what it is, he later returns with interest when his assailant is safely outnumbered). But his point—and Bergman's—is stinging accurate. Like psychiatrists, artists can only work on the basis of what is inside themselves, and the truths that they uncover are as much personal as general. What amuses Bergman, however, is that the array of truths in his self-portraits is so complex and elusive that his would-be analysts can lose even themselves in the attempt to ferret them out.

As with *Persona*, he challenges us in *Hour of the Wolf* (United Artists) to detect what is real in an indigenously unreal situation, and absolves himself from any responsibility towards providing a solution by confronting us at the conclusion as at the beginning with Liv Ullmann's appealing expression of contrite and inarticulate bewilderment. Bergman has always been at pains to establish that within the arch of his own proscenium anything can happen, and that when it does it will be, in several senses, his own affair. His method might be a game of charades, a cartoon on an ancient projector, a circus act, a medieval roadshow, an opening and closing on flaring carbons, but there has rarely been a Bergman film without at some point a miniature curtain being raised to reveal posturing souls in torment. The purpose is twofold: on the one hand to remind his audience that even a one-act play requires a *deus ex machina*, on the other to stress that just as words are inadequate communication symbols for pure thought, so drama is merely an attempt to formulate for easier comprehension concepts normally too abstract to be defined.

Films and theatre cannot help but allegorise, for they involve contrivance and artificiality; but the joke, as Bergman sees it, is that through artifice they are nevertheless capable of getting closer to reality than any other medium. The joke is better still

when that reality turns out to be nebulous or, like the logic of Aquinas, perversely illogical. For all that the artist may proclaim the unimportance of his work in the world of man, it is only through that work that the world can be revealed, an endless paradox.

So Bergman turns *Hour of the Wolf* into a succession of deceptive curtain-raising, each leading us into deeper darkness until, like the exhausted couple keeping each other awake until dawn, we can conjure demons out of nothing. To start, the Bergman proscenium. Behind simple credits, the racket of stagehands at work, dwindling to a hush as the scene is set. Added alienation and insulation, as a narrator (Bergman himself?) puts the whole thing on the level of a dry report; then, as yet another complication, Alma Borg gives her version of the circumstances of her husband's disappearance.

Not until the flashbacks do we eventually come to grips with what appear to be the basic facts, and these in turn convey a speedy unreliability. Did Alma really receive a visit from an old lady in white whose hand she might have held and whose words were sometimes lost in the roar of the sea, or did she invent her (based on a fantastic sketch by her husband) to conceal her guilty intrusion into the secrets of Johann's diary? Worse, although we can assume that her recollection of the diary entries is accurate, does the diary itself report truths or inventions, genuine or imagined hallucinations? One can prowl through *Hour of the Wolf* with pedantic schematism and deduce from the evidence provided by husband or wife or both (and taking roughly into account the stages of their mental disintegration) what is 'real' (all their scenes together), what is distorted 'reality' (most of the scenes at the castle), and what is totally 'unreal' (for the sake of argument, all scenes described only in Johann's diary plus the murder of the boy)—although whichever way one interlocks the jigsaw there are awkward pieces (the

assault on Heerbrand, the arrival of the gun, and the final scene of Johann's disappearance).

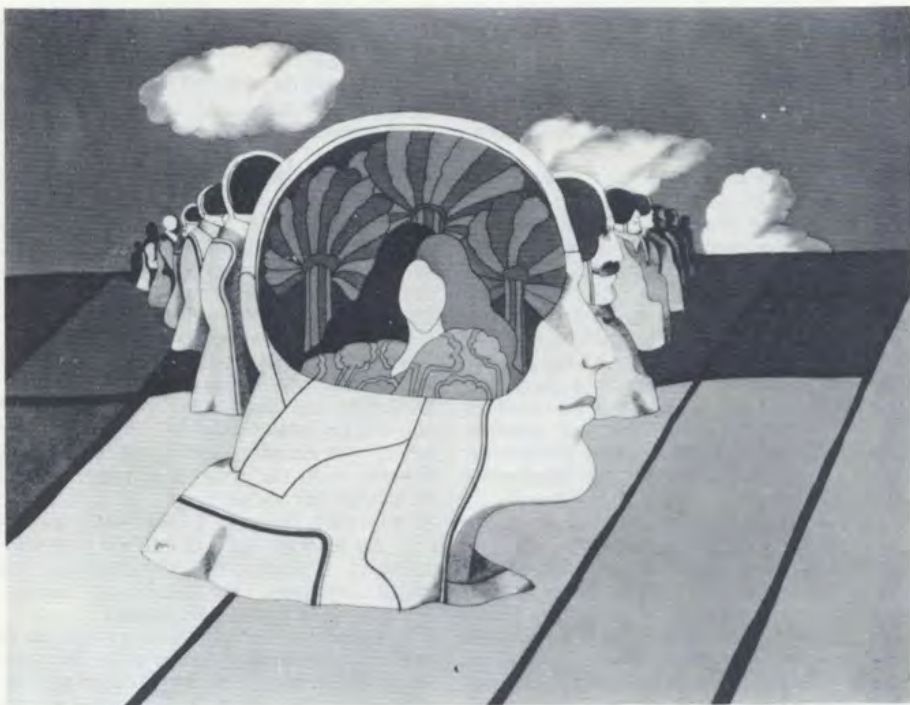
But to sift through the film in this way is to imply that parts of it can be disregarded or discarded altogether in favour of a tidy narrative of psychopathic degeneration. They can't. *Hour of the Wolf* contrives to be another step forward on the path that could imaginably, and honourably, have reached its destination with *Persona*; and it does so both by approaching the *Persona* argument from an entirely new (and healthily sardonic) tangent, and by enriching it with several layers of illustration. The richest, perhaps Bergman's richest yet, is the link with 'The Magic Flute'. Controlled by the satanic impresario Lindhorst (on whose face a shadow flings a clown's smile), yet another curtain rises, to reveal Tamino with the song of mingled despair and hope (*O ew'ge Nacht*) that is at the same time a hymn to a love worth seeking and an apology for unfamiliarity with the rules of Freemasonry (representing, one might interpret, the established society from which Johann is an outcast).

It's a hefty clue, and there's a case to be made for relating everyone from Bergman downwards to the dying Mozart and his chameleon-like characters, whether or not one can strain this further than the astonishing scene in which Lindhorst/Papageno conducts Johann/Tamino along a corridor thick with wings to the room of Veronica/Pamina. "You see what you want to see," calls the Bird Man, feathers and all. However, the subsequent destruction of Johann by his jealous admirers, who having laughed him to scorn proceed to tear him to bits (they have, after all, found his replacement already in the pallid form of Kapellmeister Kreisler), is hardly vintage Mozart so much as undiluted contemporary Bergman, for whom critics were ever a fickle bunch...

Twenty-two years ago (*Crisis*) Bergman was telling the story of a man torn between two women; ten years ago (*The Face*) he

"HOUR OF THE WOLF".





"YELLOW SUBMARINE".

was showing a performer being stripped of his mask, and five years ago (*The Silence*) he was revealing a single human coin by the examination of both its sides. All these were present in *Persona*, and they recur again in *Hour of the Wolf*, augmented on the immediate visual level by such familiar Bergman phrases as the bleached flashback (*Sawdust and Tinsel*), the errant eyeball (*The Face*), and the corpse that rises laughing from its slab (*Wild Strawberries*).

Yet there are new departures, too—the dizzying revolve by Nykvist's camera around the dinner-table, the hideous ambivalence of the murder scene, the startling levitation of the Baron (a joke that is delicately capped by von Sydow's nervous glance at the ceiling as he hurries on his way), the jump-cuts with the firing of the gun, the rapturous Lester-style burst of sunlight on the lens as Veronica flings herself into her lover's arms. "Awful things can happen," she murmurs. "Dreams can be revealed." Nightmares as well, it seems. In the hour before dawn, Bergman's imagination remains the finest, and the most disturbing, of all the cinema's modern visionaries.

PHILIP STRICK

YELLOW SUBMARINE

WE ARE TOLD that this Beatles cartoon feature originated as a fantasy adventure for children. During its evolution through twenty-one scripts the children have been left behind. The confusion of aims indicated by the snowstorm of scripts has nevertheless persisted on to the screen. There are signs that a rattling good yarn was envisaged in some quarters—yet a yarn which kept its cool, mind you: a submarine adventure was not necessarily the same thing as a Trip through another Dimension. And yet this is no weird cocktail of mind-blowing jargon and comic-strip adventure. On the contrary, it blends the knowingness and the simplicity to produce a work which

might well be subtitled, *Songs of Innocence and Experience*.

Whether this is due to the Beatles, or to the skills of director George Dunning, designer Heinz Edelmann or musical director George Martin, it's hard to tell. This is what happens:—

The Beatles gratefully leave Liverpool to join a sea-captain aboard his yellow submarine, intending to voyage to Pepperland in order to rid it of the Blue Meanies, who hate music and have petrified its inhabitants and fixed in blue amber their happy musicians, Sergeant Pepper and the Lonely Hearts Club Band. Passing through the Sea of Monsters, the Sea of Science, the Sea of Holes, the Land of Nowhere and the Foothills of the Headlands, they finally arrive at Pepperland and, after due reverses, revive and restore the inhabitants, including Sergeant Pepper and the LHCB, even managing to soothe the savage breast of the chief Meanie himself.

In other words it is simple, good-natured stuff, so mild in fact that it may cool off audiences who want a tougher story. It is not childlike, though. Looking for George in a hall of many doors, someone asks, what day is it today. Sitarday, comes the reply. Oh well, in that case, George'll be in here. If the jokes are sophisticated, and sometimes funny, the pictures are beyond all expectation distinguished. Opening the door, we step into India. On part of the screen the eternal oxen of India strain against the plough. And suddenly with the rushing of a hot and dusty wind, George indeed rises from the plains. The golden clouds race behind his head, his hair streams in the wind, and for a moment we catch a breath of an old continent, or some suggestion of a culture infinitely remote and infinitely refined, to which, with application, we might connect. What would be unbearable mythologising is saved here—on the screen, if not in this description—by a modest irony, and the pleasure and surprise of *Yellow Submarine* (United Artists) is that it so modestly finds the general in the particular. Behind the events of this banal odyssey lie some striking and touching notions, not simply about the

Beatles, but about their generation as well.

The film begins with a few words about Pepperland. "Eighteen thousand leagues beneath the sea it lay—or lies, you can't be too sure." The doubt is deliberate and recurrent. Ringo's car changes colour constantly, but "it's all in the mind." Time flows backward and forward in the sub, and the voyagers are fascinated by the idea of Relativity, from which theory they rather boldly infer that nothing much matters. This proposition is supported by the song "The Nowhere Man" ("He's a real Nowhere Man, Doesn't have a point of view, Knows not where he's going to, Isn't he a bit like you and me?"), and another in which George pretends, "It doesn't really matter what chords I play or words I say . . ." Pretends is the word, for the film trumpets the oldest message in the world, *Amor Vincit Omnia*, and there is no need for us to sneer that yet another generation has discovered a truism and wants us to watch them celebrate it.

What is arresting is that, beneath the insouciant display of oriental resignation, they seem to be quite desperately searching for a style and a scale of values in which to operate the imperative 'love'. Images of nostalgia flood the screen. It's no coincidence that they turn for a hero to Sergeant Pepper and the glory of Empire, the good brave cause, the plumage of uniform. In the brilliant Eleanor Rigby sequence (by Charlie Jenkins) the lonely people tramp to work through a bleak Liverpool reflected in the transom-glass of a street door. Crumpled along the bottom of the glass frame lies a fly-blown paper Union Jack, relic of some forgotten celebration—the climbing of Everest? the four-minute mile by Bannister? the Coronation? The past is catching up. Only fifteen years away its images of promise already petrify into unacceptable but not risible symbols. The flag is not a joke, but a sad reminder. The Liverpool of Eleanor Rigby *could* be transformed. The ton-up boy who weeps a tear imprisoned by his goggles finds a brother in Pepperland. Before his rescue a sad man in glasses spills a tear too, that cannot find the way out.

But even the relief of Pepperland is spiked with nostalgia. Who are these cardboard people to whom music is the food of love? They seem to have frozen in time: Edwardian matrons, knickerbockered tennis girls, governesses and nannies, Alices in Wonderland abandoned by impossibly young moustachioed daddies off to the wars with the Hun.

If the story rifles the attic for a wearable uniform, the eclecticism of the visual style matches it. It leans heavily on Surrealism, but many 20th-century movements are represented, as well as that special brand of illustration which Alain le Foll was evolving in the pages of *twen* in the early Sixties: lush, lilliputian, indulgent, childlike, dramatic; straining, like nostalgia, after impossible victories of emotion over reason.

Perhaps that is the note in the film to which we most respond, and though it may not be noble, it has its moments of triumph. In a different style, Lucy in the Sky dances with John in a setting from a Hollywood musical, the screen floods and sparkles with colour and movement, the dancers swim in air. They belong to another age—not of martial splendour now, but of incomparable elegance and poignant grace. In a flash we seem to see two great stars, Astaire and Rogers perhaps, spinning effortlessly in the amber of nostalgia, fixed in that place

where, miraculously, love has at last conquered all. If this is Pepperland we willingly undertake the voyage, whether we get there or not. Like all good fairytales, this unheroic odyssey does, at moments, achieve those impossible victories.

GAVIN MILLAR

PLAYTIME

ONE OR TWO CRITICS have suggested that the real time for appreciating Jacques Tati's films will be in twenty years or so. Hesitantly, one suspects that they could be right. Not, heaven knows, because either Tati's techniques or his ideas are ahead of their time. But unless one simply finds him a very funny man (or, for that matter, a very unfunny one), here and now, there's a certain unease in reactions to his comedy, and to *Playtime* (Screenspace) in particular. The voice speaking from the screen is sympathetic, thoughtful, so obviously not negligible. Why at this moment has one so little interest in what it's saying?

It may have to do with Tati's own awkward relation in time to the silent comedians with whom he's inevitably compared; and perhaps also a certain boredom about brave new worlds, crushing or failing to crush tenacious individuality. 1984, comic or serious, has been with us too long; and it could be that Tati's comedy will come into perspective about the time when the sets of *Playtime* begin to look like antiques.

In *Mon Oncle*, the absurd mechanised house, with its cold blue waterspouting fish in the garden, was the exception, the anomaly in Hulot's Paris. In *Playtime*, glass and steel are everywhere. (Tati, of course, couldn't find either the architecture or the film-maker's peace and quiet he wanted in real Paris, and built his own studio city.) But obviously Tati doesn't dislike his city sets any more than, say, Antonioni does. The mirror buildings, in which a man can go on for ever chasing his own or someone else's reflection, fascinate him to a point of infatuation. His very simple thesis, reiterated in each of the sections which make up *Playtime*, is that within the buildings there still survives his Paris—the Paris of intransigent, argumentative, unmechanised people.

Playtime opens rather splendidly, in an airport corridor which looks as cool and clinical as a hospital for ailing computers, and where travellers talk as though visiting the sick—until a lumpish blue-overalled cleaner stumbles in, bringing untidiness into a setting too spotless to need his services. After this, we're off with Hulot to an automated office-block where the machinery does everything to discourage callers from meeting people they've come to see, and then to a trade exhibition. Even here, though, the point is not so much the daftness of the proliferating gadgetry, aids to living such as non-slam doors, but the fact that two little old ladies who have strayed in with a broken electric lamp do actually get it mended—by non-automated Hulot.

The central sequence, however, is the long, chaotic one in the restaurant whose abilities are clearly never going to catch up with its pretensions. Coroneted chairs leave customers' suits apparently marked for life; the barman peers wildly round a kind of battlemented canopy; projecting bits and pieces shred the waiters' jackets; the

architect runs around squeaking like a maddened mouse. All the bogus grandeur of the place gradually collapses—first into a free-for-all, then an impromptu party which again celebrates the victory of Hulot's style of muddled sanity.

In theory, it is a classic comedy sequence; in detail it is exact and observant, under-rather than over-stressed, almost affectionate in its catalogue of the restaurant's flagging devotion to its *nouveau riche* dreams. But how little, all things considered, one actually finds to laugh at; and what a relief it is when we come to the long-awaited, most obvious, and unmistakably funniest gag—when someone finally does try to walk straight through the glass door.

Tati, the diffident autocrat of show business, works over his films in the most meticulous detail, hand-polishing every facet. But when they actually reach us, comedy sequences can still retain a curiously irresolute look. Did he *really* time it that way on purpose, one wonders, as some toppling cardhouse of gags seemingly collapses just before the last storey is added? The restaurant sequence in *Playtime*, for instance, has a rather appealing joke about a vast fish, dumped down by a customer's table at an early stage in the proceedings. At intervals, some wild-eyed waiter adds a little more salt and pepper, pours on another dollop of cream, then vanishes as waiters do. The congealing fish, mercilessly peppered, lingers on—like the other running joke, about the waiter who is banished because of a slightly torn jacket, and ends up draped in bits and pieces of his colleagues' ravaged uniforms.

In a sense, there's something admirable in Tati's refusal to do the expected thing, to build on these jokes or provide them with any sort of climax. They are simply there, off-hand annotations, muffled by comic timing which often seems just fractionally off-centre. Tati can linger over a scene (a girl trying to photograph an old flower-seller, for instance, with passers-by inter-

rupting) until you begin to wonder what mysterious charm he can possibly find in it; or he can leave a confrontation splendidly and suggestively incomplete, like the meeting on rival escalators between two lines of harried American tourists.

But perhaps the problem of *Playtime* is also the problem of Hulot. Tati gives him a rather subdued role, a wanderer and on-looker, always striking up little friendships but essentially solitary. Hulot is not a forthcoming man; and *Playtime*, for all its theoretical emphasis on human contact in a steely city, is by no means a forthcoming film. The ending is typical and equivocal. Enmeshed in the gadgetry of a supermarket, unable to escape, Hulot watches while the girl drives obliviously away in her glass bus. Opening the little present he has sent her, she pulls out a tiny spray of lily of the valley—curved stalks and white bell-heads, exactly repeating the swan-neck shapes of the street lamps along the motorway. Clearly the resemblance is important to Tati. Is it also important to him that the symbolic little posy is itself made of plastic?

PENELOPE HOUSTON

THE WHITE BUS

LINDSAY ANDERSON'S *The White Bus* (United Artists) was made in 1965/66 as one episode in a three-part film, *Red, White and Zero*. After several metamorphoses the project failed to jell; and the other two parts, Tony Richardson's *Red and Blue* and Peter Brook's *The Ride of the Valkyries*, are being distributed separately.

The White Bus therefore stands on its own, as a fascinating experiment if not exactly an interesting, still less a successful, film. Lindsay Anderson has tried to do everything at once, within a mere forty-five minutes, so falling among several more easily attainable stools. It is as if, guessing in advance that *The White Bus* was unlikely

JACQUES TATI IN "PLAYTIME".



to be a complete success artistically (or commercially, for that matter), he had attempted a bravely all-inclusive gesture, not so much gathering up the past as pointing to the future. But perhaps his critical sense, realising that the film was likely to be misunderstood anyway, has partly paralysed his creative force; and so the final result is often mean-spirited where it is meant to be generous, and opaque where it is intended to be psychologically subtle.

It may be that the spirit of Humphrey Jennings, so resolutely called on, refuses to be evoked in the mid-Sixties. Or that Vigo, also hovering around, needs a commitment at once more savagely anarchistic and more humanely tender in which to work as a living influence.

The initial choice of vehicle can hardly have helped, since Shelagh Delaney's 'The White Bus' was one of several feeble little sketches which rounded out her short series of stories on childhood and adolescence into the minimal book-length of *Sweetly Sings the Donkey*. She has greatly enlarged and varied the original material in her script for the film, presumably with the director's help and encouragement, but at the cost of whatever unity was given to the story by her own presence in it.

Patricia Healey was clearly cast as a slightly more glamorous and more sharply photogenic version of Miss Delaney herself—as emerges strikingly during the occasional moments in John Fletcher's admirably instructive documentary *About The White Bus*, where the two girls appear in the same shot. But the character is transformed from a well-known and quite outspoken young playwright, coming home from a day trip to London, into a 'typical' provincial girl (though, untypically, hardly less silent than Elizabeth Vogler) who works in London and returns, perhaps only occasionally and rather despondently, to search for her roots in rapidly changing Manchester.

The representative quality thus given to

the character inevitably generalises the mixture of documentary and fantasy, already present in the original sketch, into a much more ambitious and sweeping statement about the quality of modern life in the English industrial conurbations, as seen through alienated eyes. But the girl's response is confined to a weary deadpan or an enigmatic smile—'de jolie Sphinx', as Lemmy Caution remarked of the not dissimilar Natasha von Braun in *Alphaville*. So we are forced to read her view into the images themselves rather than her reactions.

Anderson, like most medium-respecting modern film-makers, refuses any sharp distinction between objective and subjective images. He throws out fantasy-clues only to retract them: e.g. in the opening London sequences, the hanging woman among the indifferent office cleaners or the passionately singing young City gent on the railway platform—*directly* subjective fantasy-effects of a type not used again in the rest of the film. Or he discounts the clues in advance, notably the interspersed colour shots, the first few of which are so unstressed and casually documentary as to undermine deliberately the later and almost academic use of colour for 'Quotations' related to paintings and to the *idea* of art and artifice.

These conscious inconsistencies reflect one of the central themes carried over, greatly elaborated, from the Delaney story: the relationship between rhetoric and the actuality of civic life. In the film the rhetoric is as much visual as verbal—the actual public buildings, blocks of flats, vast factories which dwarf the civic officials and foreign visitors and even the White Bus itself in which they tour the city, as well as the mispronounced courierspiel of the well-meaning Conductress (Julie Perry) and the smooth platitudes of the Mayor (Arthur Lowe). And the effect is further reinforced by a multitude of film and other references, from *Vivre sa Vie* to *En Passant par la Lorraine*, from Goya to Fragonard, from (of course) *Coronation Street* to 'Carry

On, Barker', from *A Kind of Loving* to *Listen to Britain*, from *Zéro de Conduite* to *Fires Were Started*, from (perhaps) Kurosawa to (maybe) John Read. (Indeed, the occasional resemblances to the Beatles' *Magical Mystery Tour*, made eighteen months or so later, are almost the only associations which can be discounted as purely accidental.)

Yet the total effect of all this apparently rich diversity of implication is to reduce nearly everything to parody. The film gets plenty of laughs from an audience—but it is more desperately reductive than comic. Mischa Donat's gay little theme tune for the White Bus only punctuates the movements round a landscape of despair. Violence may be frozen (the stuffed lions fighting), or merely enacted (the Civil Defence demonstration), or even comic (the bowler-hatted Councillor tackling a Japanese sword-fighter). But the basic mood of frustration and rejection predominates, since parody undercuts any serious acceptance of the world depicted.

This mood seems, though tentatively, to change in the final sequences when the Girl abandons the tourists, now all turned to dummies, and wanders alone through the twilight backstreets. A couple of shots through windows (a schoolgirl playing the piano, an old woman shaving an old man) relate to Jennings in spirit, not in parody, and remind us that Anderson once directed the beautifully humane *Thursday's Children*. But the actual ending retracts these hints of affirmation. The clearing up of chairs in the chip shop and the grim catalogue of the endless drudgery of work in the dialogue echo the cleaning of the London office in the opening shots. The final fade-out on Patricia Healey is a filmic question-mark.

Not only about the Girl in *The White Bus* but also about the Director in *About The White Bus*. Anderson has certainly taken a step in his career, but more sideways than forward. For all the technical bravura of its parts (reinforced by Miroslav Ondricek's versatile and often atmospheric camerawork), *The White Bus* makes no unified impact. An ambitious and experimental failure by Lindsay Anderson is better worth watching than a boring 'success' by most other British directors. But his admirers, like *Oliver Twist*, will continue to ask for more.

DANIEL MILLAR

"THE SWIMMER": BURT LANCASTER.



THE SWIMMER

LEAVES RUSTLE and twigs snap, sending a rabbit scurrying to its burrow and a deer into the foliage, as a man treads his way through autumnal woods in Connecticut. But in this case the intruder in nature is also an intruder in civilisation; as Ned Merrill (finely played by Burt Lancaster), with his healthy, tanned body clothed only in a pair of bathing trunks, emerges on to the concrete pool-side patio on the exurban estate of some one-time friends, he seems as out of place among the paunchy executives with their Sunday hangovers as he did among the deer and rabbits. Like his physique, his determination to swim in the pool that serves merely as a status symbol and backdrop for open-air cocktails marks him out—as a god or as a freak—from the wealthy world into which he has wandered.

But his friends are delighted to see him again after so many years, and enquiring

after his wife are reassured to learn (in the phrase that will become a kind of litany) that "Lucinda's just fine and the girls are at home playing tennis." And as Merrill sips a ritual drink with them, looking across the country with its lush vegetation punctuated by tiny, chemical blue pools, the project for his minor odyssey takes shape: he will swim home to his wife via the chain of pools which he sentimentally christens the Lucinda river.

The project for him is an heroic one, and the distance of the nine-mile journey that formed the basis of John Cheever's remarkable *New Yorker* story is left unspecified in the film, thus taking on the epic proportions that it acquires in Merrill's mind. But as his pilgrimage gets under way, its peculiar pathos slowly becomes apparent. The nature to which the swimmer returns is itself the product of the synthetic society he is trying to transcend—earth-filtered water captured in tons of structural aluminium and clear plastic. His journey forward becomes a journey backward in time, the welcome that awaits him at each pool becoming less friendly as he gets nearer home. Echoes of unresolved grievances and encounters with former friends (an old lady who holds him responsible for her son's death; a hostile hostess who hints that his daughters are alcoholic sluts; a pair of ageing nudists who refer obliquely to his bankruptcy; the ex-mistress who alludes to his wife's frigidity; a grocer's wife embittered by his unpaid bills) turn the voyage of discovery into one of self-discovery.

By the time Merrill has limped across the freeway (shades of *Lonely Are the Brave*) into the shrieking crowd at the municipal pool, his dream has become the nightmare confrontation not just of the plastic waste land of American civilisation but of his own failure. The ascent of his private Everest has become a descent into his private hell; until, with the darkening sky mirroring his visible disintegration, his efforts most resemble those of a salmon struggling upstream to die on the spawning grounds. Inevitably when the swimmer—in blinding rain—reaches his home, there is no smiling wife, no playing children: the tennis court, like the deserted house, is overgrown with weeds, and he beats in vain on the door.

As if in answer to those critics who objected to the tidiness of his first film (*David and Lisa*), Frank Perry's *The Swimmer* (Columbia) deals deliberately in loose ends; and the different jigsaw pieces of Merrill's life never entirely fit together. The vagabond swimmer suffers throughout from a kind of emotional amnesia, believing his own lies about his family, with no recollection of what or where he has been for the past few years. There are hints of several possibilities—that he has been leading a Rousseau-esque existence in the forest, has murdered his family, or escaped from an asylum—but the 'right' answer is never supplied. Though his film has all the ingredients of a whodunnit (or a who done what?), Perry tantalisingly withholds the final answer, showing one man's inability to face reality without specifying the particular form that this reality takes.

Whatever it is, Merrill's nostalgia for a heroism that has become unattainable, his desire to play Peter Pan in a land of Captain Hooks, is shown as something only children can understand. The lonely child selling lemonade by the roadside while his mother is abroad on yet another honeymoon manages for a moment to share



"CHARLIE BUBBLES": ALBERT FINNEY, BILLIE WHITELAW.

the swimmer's dream; the teenage babysitter (a splendid, Lolita-ish first performance from Janet Landgard) joins for a while in the adventure, thrilled when Merrill quotes the Song of Songs at her, but recoiling when he strokes the belly he has likened to wheat, his words constructing a romantic fantasy while his actions—as throughout the film—betray the 'suburban stud' his brittle but vulnerable ex-mistress denounces in the final encounter.

According to Hollis Alpert in *The Saturday Review*, this sequence was originally made by Perry with Barbara Loden, and then reshot, at producer Sam Spiegel's request, by Sidney Pollack with Janice Rule. Certainly it has a sharper edge than the rest of the film. For it is in spite rather than because of the direction—with its slow motion idyll, cigarette commercial photography, psychedelic shots of the sun, soft-focus verdure and heavy symbolism—that Cheever's story survives as a powerful and disturbing film.

JAN DAWSON

CHARLIE BUBBLES and INTERLUDE

THE MAIN THING to be said about *Charlie Bubbles* (Rank) is that it is really not like anything else. That need not, of course, be a good quality, but it is, at any time, a pretty unusual one, especially in a first film by a new director or a first original screenplay by a writer. And in this case the qualities are all positive: if the film is like nothing else it is because it gives one a real new experience in the cinema: that of an original talent flexing its creative muscles.

Hard to be sure how much of this comes from the original screenplay by Shelagh Delaney and how much from the way it is realised by Albert Finney. *The White Bus* offers a useful stalking-horse here. Both stories seem to originate in Shelagh Delaney's own sense of alienation on returning

north after success as a writer in the south. In *The White Bus* the accent, despite an apparently downbeat ending, is fairly cheerful: one is allowed to presume that in her return to sources the girl has found some sort of refreshment to counteract the suicidal effect of office life in London. If it is possible to consider the script of *Charlie Bubbles* in isolation, one could read something of the same feeling into it: a lot of it could be played as comedy, ironical comedy or even, perish the thought, whimsical comedy. But this is where Albert Finney seems to come in; partly as a star, but above all as director.

Finney's star personality, as we know from (especially) *Two for the Road*, is not gracious: he is best at conveying awkwardness, obstinacy, grimness, obsession. So it is perhaps a foregone conclusion that he should endow the hero of his first film with some of these qualities. In doing so he is not, seemingly, contradicting anything in the screenplay, but he is surely going in some important respects beyond what was set down there in black and white.

His Charlie is, from the very start, a mind at the end of its tether. The fooling at the restaurant is grim and joyless, the French-farical comings and goings inexorably recorded on the multiple monitor screens which lay his whole house bare to him in his top-floor den are counterpointed by his own exhaustion and near despair in front of them. The drive north with his eager, idiotic American secretary, the matey airman they give a lift to, the barbed acquaintances they meet at the motorway snackbar, is a silent nightmare; and the loveless, almost involuntary love-making in the Manchester hotel, overlaid with the ghastly synthetic brightness of constant Muzak, is even more awful. A return to nature, to ex-wife and young son, brings no relief, and the final escape, into a masterless balloon, is a release only in the sense that death is sometimes said to be.

All this comes, as much as anything, from the way the film is made. It has a dogged, relentless, interior quality very different

from anything one might expect, given the fanciful stills and the whimsy-sounding title. In a sense the whole film is obsessively centred on Charlie, but not because there is a possibly narcissistic leading man behind as well as in front of the camera. On the contrary, Finney the star has relatively little to do: he is the almost passive centre round which things revolve, and we see things through his eyes rather than reflected in them. Occasionally the film is stylistically bold, as in the monitor-screens sequence, but when it is so it is in a mercifully unswinging way: nothing for show, everything to convey as vividly as possible what the director thinks the film is about.

For the most part, anyway, everything is fairly straightforward and undecorated, working towards a dark unity of conception (impossible to say, for instance, whether Liza Minnelli as the secretary/mistress can act: all one can observe is that she is immaculately used). There are bits that don't work, or seem not to work at a first viewing: the balloon at the end, for instance, is roughly unprepared, and does not come off either as a lightning change of tone, though it can be perfectly justified in hindsight analysis. But even the film's few mistakes are big, honest, endearing ones.

Interlude (Columbia), by contrast, is almost alarmingly circumspect. It is also a first feature by a director new to the cinema, though this time—since it is Kevin Billington—a very experienced director in television. It also concerns, after a fashion, an emotional crisis in the life of a successful artist. But beyond that the resemblance ends. The premise of *Interlude's* plot is frankly novelettish: a conductor of international fame meets an eager young girl reporter who is sent to interview him, finds himself unexpectedly with a few weeks to spare for a quick summer dalliance, but then discovers that he is in deeper than he bargained for, and nearly wrecks his marriage before reason prevails.

Again, as in *Charlie Bubbles*, though in a very different way, the contribution of the director is capital: taking this slightly woman's magazine framework, Kevin Billington fills in his picture with a mass of lovingly observed small details. The way, for instance, that the girl's manner and even her accent change very slightly when she is with the conductor compared with when she is with her best friend at the office; the whole part of the wife, and the conductor's changing but always believable relationship with her, which makes the easy cliché that he loves both women in different ways perfectly comprehensible and credible; the depiction of the conductor himself, which is far from the admiring sketch of 'artistic temperament' normal in such cinematic circumstances.

The film is conspicuously well acted by Oskar Werner as the conductor, conveying the purposeful selfishness beneath the easy charm, and Virginia Maskell as the wife; less well by Barbara Ferris, who is unflatteringly photographed and seems often to be straining for the bubbling girlish quality the part ideally requires. Still, a remarkable debut for a director unused to working with professional actors. If Billington seems to be easing himself in at the shallow end where most new British directors immediately settle for a big splash at the deep, at least one leaves the film with a cheering confidence that he has already surfaced and is swimming strongly, while others plunge spectacularly to the depths.

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

FACES

JOHN CASSAVETES' fourth film is a jerky, black-and-white confirmation that God doesn't love America any more, a profuse and yet skeletal excursion into that well-travelled land called suburbia, where adultery has become a quest for a successful hedonism enabling man to enjoy an otherwise meaningless life. Following *Shadows* and the two attempts at Hollywood non-conformism, *Too Late Blues* and *A Child is Waiting*, this new film confirms Cassavetes' special epicentric place in American cinema.

Faces (Paramount) is deceptive. It is as communal an effort as the story of adultery it tells, shot in and out of the director's own house and neighbouring West Hollywood with professional and amateur actors and technicians: yet it has its author's imprint (Cassavetes also wrote it). Shot two years ago, the film was shelved while Cassavetes returned to acting, and finally finished (edited down from 17 hours of exposed film to 140 minutes) last spring. It will not be a popular film, although its theme of suburban angst is treated with humour. Younger filmgoers, who have learned to keep sex in its place, will laugh perhaps a little too haughtily; and maturer audiences may resent it as being too close for comfort.

The people of *Faces* are not young. The central couple are the greying executive for whom a woman, loved, momentarily eases the pain of time, and the American frau, smooth on the surface but possessed underneath by the hurts of love. American writers—and in their tow, American filmmakers—have been hitting sex for quite some time, stripping away its pretensions to holiness, mystery and galactic consequence. Cassavetes doesn't strip any further, but tries to build in his own effusive, Mediterranean way (he is a second generation Greek-American). Cuckoldry has something wanly earthy about it, and Cassavetes' wayward couple come out of their tik-tak-toe experience cut down in size only. The husband, played with ubiquitous gusto by John Marley (last seen as Jane Fonda's craggy father in *Cat Ballou*) takes his comeuppance as yet another of those little losses that used to be the point of

commedia dell'arte morality plays, while the ritual of adultery is played less mechanically by the wife (Lynn Carlin). But Cassavetes is no icy Losey—*Accident* obviously comes to mind—and his characters live, laugh and even love each other. While showing that sex is the toy, the glue, the therapy and the main line of communication for the satiated millions of the middle-class and the middle-aged, he doesn't inflate his theme with too much significance, nor does he modulate it into a lament or a parody. Since God is dead, sex means reaching for some kind of warmth.

Cassavetes' modernity is that he manages to show thought in movement rather than characters in action. His characters' unpredictability is achieved by the very free staging of scenes. Yet *Faces* is no exercise in improvisation: the actors speak the lines written by Cassavetes, but there are no cue marks. The camera follows them or haunts them and, as the title implies, most of the film is played in close-up—so close that you can almost see the cavity in Marley's third molar, or the capillary texture of the chin of Gena Rowlands (the 'other woman'). The obvious flaws of moments of soft focus when the camera hesitates, or an actor impulsively leans out of frame, are inherent in such a kinetic attack on people. The result, however, is a film that lives and breathes.

AXEL MADSEN

THE STRANGE AFFAIR

IN HIS THIRD feature former television director David Greene further develops the characteristics already revealed in *The Shattered Room* and the engaging *Sebastian*. A somewhat improbable story involving sadistic violence, drug addiction, sex, pornography and police corruption early produced hurt accusations of misrepresentation from police spokesmen and of sex-and-sensation mongering from other quarters. The validity of these charges could be challenged, but they seem largely irrelevant. For the director—although probably better qualified than many by his experiences as a former police-court reporter to answer the former, and clearly mainly engaged with the aesthetic possibilities of the sex aspects—is obviously not basically concerned in *The Strange Affair* (Paramount) with telling yet another story of crime and punishment and the destruction of innocence.

His talent is clearly individual and somewhat quirkish. He has a remarkable eye for striking visuals—prisoner and escort reflected in the shining polished side of a Black Maria, or a white helicopter against a menacing sky over Battersea Power Station—and for choosing and extracting the utmost from striking backgrounds. Here he chooses to play out his cynical story not against conventionally sleazy Soho joints or rainy slum streets but in the bright new steel-and-glass headquarters of Scotland Yard, a high camp Hampstead villa, great new skyscraper flat blocks and the debris-strewn wasteland around them.

Often the film's most successful moments are almost irrelevant embellishments: the prissy sergeant's briefing of young officers about to go on the beat, the assorted crowd of drunks, rowdies and drug addicts filling the Station during the Saturday night rush hour, or the pursuit of the petty crook across the building site and his capture

"DECLINE AND FALL": GENEVIEVE PAGE.



before a jeering audience of workmen and passers-by. Above all, the moment when the white-clad acolytes go dancing out to greet the Swami as he descends from his helicopter, leaving the wire-netting surround festooned with white umbrellas like stranded storks. Everywhere in the film there is white—white Rolls and white Mercedes, white flat, white walls in the Court and even a predominantly white police station. There is nothing so obvious as symbolism involved: David Greene is clearly as much in love with the colour as anyone in *The Knack*.

By contrast it is the more strictly relevant and serious scenes and characters which sometimes tend to pall. Jeremy Kemp is excellent as the psychotic Sergeant Pierce with his unbalanced hatred of 'bent' policemen, and Jack Watson as the head of the drug-smuggling Quince clan nicely suggests the resentment of the spoiled policeman lurking beneath the confident veneer of the successful criminal. But they cannot compare as genuine creations with Richard Vanstone and David Glaisyer as the Quince boys, very contemporary sadists convulsed with laughter at such pranks as manoeuvring a drunk into position for crushing beneath a car in the breaker's yard, or with Aunt Mary and Uncle Bertrand (Madge Ryan and George Benson), who so improbably live in fine style by filming sexy goings-on in the maid's room. Of course the director is aware that, admitting the mind-shattering possibility of such a place and such a couple existing, they would never in real life be involved in the manufacture (as against the possible consumption) of blue films. But like the true artist in any medium he knows what he likes. And audience reactions suggest he is right.

It would be wrong not to mention the performances of Michael York, who admirably depicts the disillusion and downfall of idealistic Peter Strange, or of the delicious Susan George, or to overlook the contribution of Alex Thompson's camera. But the overall stamp is obviously that of David Greene, whose next film one awaits with confidence and impatience.

JACK IBBERSON

A QUESTION OF RAPE

THE TROUBLE WITH films about reality and fantasy and the relationship, or lack of it, between them is that the cinema is a one-dimensional medium. Film images are incontrovertible, and the director (unlike the novelist) commits himself as much by the fact of using them as by the way in which he uses them. The basic flaw in Robbe-Grillet's films, for instance, is not that they leave the argument open-ended (which is, after all, the *sine qua non* of all art) but that they fail to define the limitations of the argument. Since every film image carries as much weight as the next, we must have some point of reference, some way of deciding (it doesn't matter *how* we decide) what is 'real' and what is not, or the exercise becomes as futile as a game without rules. In *Waiting for Godot* it matters little that we never know who Godot is, since we do know that we are waiting for him. And in *A Question of Rape* (Miracle) Jacques Doniol-Valcroze provides us with a similar point of reference, a framework of reality.

This framework is the central character Marianne (Bibi Andersson), whom we see settling down for a lazy day after her

husband has set off on a hunting trip. After that it's up to us; and though Doniol-Valcroze sprinkles verbal and visual clues about, he leaves us to decide for ourselves whether what happens in the rest of the film is real or simply a figment of Marianne's imagination. What happens is that Marianne opens the door to a stranger (Bruno Cremer) who says he has come to deliver a parcel but instead produces a gun. The stranger, Walter, keeps her prisoner and at the end of the day leaves as abruptly as he came, only to reappear almost immediately as one of the guests at a dinner party, and again later with his gangster's raincoat over his dinner-jacket.

This final scene, when Doniol-Valcroze seems to be trying to add another and unnecessary dimension of ambiguity, is the film's only major weakness. Up to that point it is beautifully precise, pared down to essentials, almost every scene conveying a subtle shift in the relationship between Walter and Marianne. At first one has no reason to doubt that Walter is anything but real; but as the camera pulls back to take in the formalised decor of the flat (all white walls and impersonal furniture), one senses the gradual impingement of illusion. Walter's behaviour is more and more an involuntary reaction to Marianne's reaction to him, until in the end their situation comes full circle with the suggestion that it is *she* who invites *him* to make love to her—though previously we have seen a flash shot conveying her terror of being raped by him. Throughout this central section of the film Doniol-Valcroze's almost mathematically cool camera style abstracts the characters from their surroundings: each character is seen to have an independently existing persona and simultaneously to be (perhaps) a projection of the other's fantasy.

In this circumscribed precision *Le Viol* (to give it its oddly less equivocal French title) is strikingly reminiscent of *Marienbad*, and much more successful as a pure exercise in ambivalence than any of Robbe-Grillet's own films. It is only, in fact, in the awkwardly tacked on final scene and in an occasional self-conscious touch (like the animated photograph on the wall of the flat, or the circular pan which reveals Marianne standing in different positions as Walter reads to her from a book) that one is reminded that Doniol-Valcroze was last seen among the baroque trappings of *L'Immortelle*.

DAVID WILSON

DECLINE AND FALL

THE CHIEF ARGUMENT about Ivan Foxwell's film version of *Decline and Fall* (20th Century-Fox) is obviously going to be about period. The book, its enthusiasts say, is an immaculate period piece of the Twenties, and it is little short of sacrilege to up-date it; worse, it makes nonsense of the characters and their backgrounds. This view, as it happens, was not shared by Evelyn Waugh, who patiently explained to those who would listen that as a picture of a particular period the book never made sense anyway. It was essentially a pantomime in which a few believable modern details rubbed shoulders with a prison straight out of Hogarth, a school out of Dickens, and a white slave trade on the Gay Nineties model. So there seems little doubt that in principle Foxwell is right in his adaptation to put aside all idea of



"THE STRANGE AFFAIR": MICHAEL YORK.

recreating the Twenties with archaeological accuracy, and plump instead for the book's own gleeful mingling of styles and periods.

Anyway, principles be damned, it works in practice. The only point at which one might feel a slight twinge is when it transpires that Grimes lost his leg being run over by a bus, rather than a tram: a tram is somehow that much more satisfyingly unheroic. Elsewhere the film captures the spirit of the novel with remarkable fidelity: to a fault even, since it tends to run out of wind in the last section, from our hero's confinement in jail, in almost exactly the same way that the book does. Otherwise it keeps up the pace splendidly: the action is cut to the bone, and in one or two cases a little beyond—there are moments where the transitions in Pennyfeather's faltering progress towards enlightenment remain a trifle abrupt and obscure. The most memorable sequences, inevitably, are Pennyfeather's subjection to Dr. Fagan's eccentric ideas of education for young gentlemen at Llanabba, and his first tangles with high life at King's Thursday (this last splendidly conjured up in John Barry's sets, of a staggering vulgarity).

And all along, there are the performances. This is much more an actors' film than a director's (though that is not to underestimate the part John Krish must have played in conjuring such excellent performances from his cast). Leo McKern is Grimes as one has always imagined him; Colin Blakely has just the right neck-or-nothing flamboyant disreputableness as Philbrick, and it would be hard to find fault with Donald Wolfitt (his last role) as Fagan, Patience Collier as Flossie Fagan, Robert Harris as Prendegast or Geneviève Page as the awful, fascinating Margot Beste-Chetwynde. But perhaps best of all, because handed the most difficult part, that of the perpetual straight-man Pennyfeather, and then required to hold the film together with it, is Robin Phillips. As to the film he does hold together, one would say that it is, its obvious entertainment value apart, far and away the best screen adaptation of Waugh yet—if that did not, in the circumstances, sound all too disastrously like damning with faint praise.

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

FILM CLIPS

THE FILM CAREERS of our recognised stage greats have generally been rather peculiar—or else, as in the case of Peggy Ashcroft, virtually non-existent. John Gielgud's has been odder than most. Overall it presents a curious mirror-image to Laurence Olivier's. If we take the difference between a screen star and a screen actor to be that the star assimilates all his roles to himself, while the actor assimilates himself to his roles, we might shortly put it that Olivier was a great and genuine screen star who has evolved into an indifferent screen actor, while Gielgud was a non-starter as a screen star but has developed into a superlative screen actor.

The books say that Gielgud began his screen career in 1932, with something called *Insult*. ("It was some sort of Foreign Legion nonsense; the only thing I remember was that the director, Harry Lachman, spent most of his time blowing smoke all over the set in order, he said, to give his compositions an old-master look.") But not so: in fact, Sir John assures me, his experience goes back to 1924 and *Who is the Man?*

"I was rather dubious about it until I discovered that I was to play the leading role, which is pretty flattering to a beginner of twenty. And, which made it irresistible, that it was a role created by Sarah Bernhardt! In fact, I think it was her last: the play was called *Daniel*, and was written for her by Louis Verneuil. In it she was able to spend the last two acts on a divan, covered in rugs, resting her wooden leg, so at least the role didn't sound too demanding. Unfortunately in adapting it they changed it round completely, so that I found myself playing a wild artist who was constantly throwing tantrums, taking drugs and generally misbehaving—all to the accompaniment of mood music on violin and piano, of course. After which there was an Edgar Wallace, *The Clue of the New Pin*, around 1929, equally silly, and then *Insult*."

How, I wondered, did he get on with Hitchcock on *Secret Agent*? "Very well on the whole. I'd read the Maugham book, which was really very interesting: you know, it's about this agent who has a problem of conscience about whether or not he can go on doing what he has been doing unthinkingly. So on the strength of that Hitchcock talked me into doing the film—and incidentally picked my brains rather for the casting. Did you know we had the first Mrs. Max Beerbohm, Florence Kahn, in it,



JOHN GIELGUD AS COUNT VON BERCHTOLD, KENNETH MORE AS THE KAISER IN "OH! WHAT A LOVELY WAR".

and Michel St. Denis as a cabby, and all sorts of unlikely people? But then I discovered Hitchcock's own curious way with scripting. He more or less threw the story away, started again with various locations that had caught his fancy, and then concentrated on getting his characters from one to another of them as quickly as possible, with minimum concern for probability. The whole thing turned into a mad *Through the Looking Glass* chess game, in which I felt totally lost.

"Anyway, since in rewriting the central interest was divided among Robert Young, Peter Lorre and myself about equally, I was left with not much to do except show the back of my head (which in those days had some hair on it) in numerous beautiful close-ups of Madeleine Carroll. Peter Lorre was extraordinary: he was, you know, a morphinomane, and would retire to his dressing-room to take an injection and then hide in the rafters so that we couldn't find him when we wanted to shoot a scene. He was pleasant, but quite mad, I thought. Except there were strict limits to his madness. He was an absolute master of stealing scenes. At that time I was fairly inexperienced, and self-conscious about keeping to the marks and saying exactly what was in the script. On rehearsals Lorre would do the same, but as soon as the cameras started he would expand, put in new movements (which always gave him the best of the shot), improvise extra lines, and generally do everything possible to gobble up everyone else's scenes with him."

I wondered why Sir John had done so little in the Thirties and then suddenly blossomed as a busy film actor in the Fifties. "Before the war they never knew what to do with me. I was always cast as a juvenile, and I was a terrible juvenile. They tried curling my hair and all sorts of things, but they could not make me look remotely pretty-boy, neither would they consider casting me as anything else. I did, admittedly, get various wild and abortive offers from Hollywood: come and play the Hunchback of Notre Dame, Laughton has just walked

out; come and play Louis XVI in *Marie Antoinette*, someone-or-other has walked out and we're not sure we can get Robert Morley. But I took these simply as evidence that they had vaguely heard of me but had no idea what I was like or what I could do. So I stuck to the stage.

"Then there was Cassius in *Julius Caesar*, a part I had played on stage and which I could devote myself full-time to, instead of rushing from studio to theatre every evening. And I felt I was beginning to get the hang of the cinema as a place where I might function. The money is nice, of course, and it is fun to be able to play roles of a sort that I could never play on stage: nice little bits like in *Becket* or *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, or even in jolly thrillers like *Sebastian* and *Assignment to Kill*. I think that I am now beginning to get the hang of reading a film script and knowing whether a role can be effective or not, and I find that the fragmentation of filming doesn't bother me as it used to."

Any projects? Any desire, for that matter, after directing straight plays and opera on stage, to direct a film? "I don't think I really know enough to direct a film all by myself. But yes, there is one thing I would very much like to do on screen: *The Tempest*. It seems to me one of the Shakespeare plays that could best be filmed, and I was rather happy with myself in it when I played it on stage. Of course, I would want quite a lot of say in how it was done. And I thought perhaps, if it's not too mad an idea, that one of the Japanese directors, maybe the man who made *Woman of the Dunes*, would be good for it. Maybe something will come of it . . . I would like that. It would be nice to leave behind a little something to be remembered by . . ."

NO TWO WAYS about it, we say with comfortably complacent pessimism as we get up from an evening's television: they don't make pictures like that any more. What we mean could neatly be summed up in one word: *Casablanca*. It was a real education

to see again recently on the box that great original, in all its pristine splendour. Nobody, I think, would maintain that it was or is a great movie. Nobody has yet seen fit to erect Michael Curtiz into a cult figure, and although one's imagination is past boggling at the thought of who next, it is hard to imagine that anyone ever will.

No, *Casablanca* was in its time (1942), and looks now just like, a routine, surefire piece of commercial film-making. No pretensions to art, and precious few to originality. Warner Brothers going happily, uncomplicatedly through the motions, with all the usual people, Don Siegel in the montage department, and all right with the world. So why, then, does the film have an almost legendary stature? Why does it still live up to its fame and, above all, why does it still, almost infallibly, work? If it sums up ideally the feeling of 'they don't make pictures like that any more,' why does it, and why don't they?

Complicated, but not unanswerable. In fact there are so many answers one hardly knows where to start. The film's secret can be seen, most immediately, in its combination of extreme sophistication, of a sort, and extreme innocence, of a sort. The sophistication lies mainly in what it takes for granted at a purely technical, organisational level. It is the sophistication of complete confidence, in which no one has to prove anything, defend anything: there is simply an unquestioned way of doing things, and that's it. There is a whole hyper-efficient studio machine behind the film, a palpable presence in every frame. Clearly just about everybody (apart from Ingrid Bergman) is on the company payroll: they are all there, waiting to be used. The actors particularly, but also the technicians, from director down, are not called upon to justify themselves specifically in this one instance. They are cast to do what they have always done, and what everyone knows perfectly well they can do.

And what a cast it is. The sort of cast that only a big studio with lots of contract players could assemble. How else, for instance, would you get Peter Lorre and Sidney Greenstreet to take such small roles—Lorre disposed of very early in the film, Greenstreet hovering blandly as yet one more plotter in a plot-ridden *Casablanca*? In effect, they are both thrown away, but to do this gives the film an air of prodigality which is part of its satisfying richness. Also, of course, they can never be entirely thrown away, because their very presence gives body to parts which are, as written, virtually non-existent. And that is an effect which only contract casting could give you. Today everyone is either a star or a nobody (well no, there are a few who are both); and here, for this purpose, the star would be unwilling and the nobody just would not do.

Then there is the directorial side. Studio style, of course; nothing personal. But it was a studio style which served its required end very well. Brisk, to the point, confident enough to do everything as simply and cheaply as it well could be done. 'Local colour' is provided by a couple of little scenes apparently shot in a left-over or made-over Casbah set, plus some summary interludes with maps, stock-shots and the montage artistry of Mr. Siegel. Otherwise the film takes place almost entirely in interiors, or at night, against backgrounds so simple and shadowy that they could be anywhere, any time. No director now would dare to do it that way. If you were making a film called 'Casablanca' you would have

to go to Casablanca, or somewhere that would pass for it, and then provide tangible evidence that you had been in the shape of picturesque detail, quite irrelevant to the story but obedient to the theory that part of the something-for-everybody ethos is vicarious travel for those who don't like the stars and find the story too difficult, or too dull, to follow.

One thing which is absolutely essential for making a film in the *Casablanca* way is complete confidence in the script and players to hold the spectator's attention. You must take it (and be able to take it) that when the camera hovers over a pair of hands, observes them okaying something with a fast, simple signature, then slowly moves back to reveal the face, any audience will be panting in happy anticipation of finding that the face belongs to Humphrey Bogart. If they're not, then the manoeuvre is wasted; if they are, then background be damned: that's all you need.

Confidence is certainly necessary to carry it off: but whether it is the confidence of experience or the confidence of innocence, who would care to say for sure? As a matter of fact, quite a lot in the film suggests innocence. Or at least that if it was not made innocently, it was made in days of innocence. Take, for example, the way that so much in the characterisation is reduced to a minimum of conventional gesture. Just cast Lorre, Greenstreet, Veidt, or even Ingrid Bergman at that time, and you have most of the characterisation done for you right away. Bogart is, effortlessly, the sub-Hemingway hero, the disillusioned tough guy with a soft idealistic centre. We don't even really need to be told that his immediate past includes gun-running to the losing side in Abyssinia and Spain (though it is interesting that we are, when you think what misfortune such a background would have run any film notable into six or seven years later).

And that raincoat with the turned-up collar at the end. Who would dare do it now? Especially after the whole notion has been endlessly parodied and achieved the ultimate devaluation of a TV advertisement (remember "You're never alone with a Strand"?). And yet, as Bogart walks away into the night and who knows what adventurous, solitary future, doesn't the old magic still work? Couldn't it still? No, unfortunately, not without self-parody or self-consciousness; not without the difference between *The Moving Target* and *The Big Sleep*. Happy, uncomplicated days. No wonder they don't make them like that any more.

BUT THEN, I SUPPOSE, it is on the cards that we are missing at the moment just those qualities in today's films which will arouse similarly intense feelings of nostalgia twenty years hence. Maybe our vision of what form this nostalgia might take is hopelessly distorted by what we know now. Maybe, for instance, stars will count for much less and other elements—sets, costumes, the despised accumulation of irrelevant picturesque detail—for more. Anyway, I am sure that relatively few of our new 1960s stars will last with their own special lustre undimmed; mainly because precious few of them have their own special lustre even now. But at least one of them has, and has proved it (if proof be needed) by becoming beyond any shadow of doubt the biggest box-office attraction in the world today. I am referring—could you doubt it?—to Julie Andrews.



"CASABLANCA".

Not, of course, that this lofty position in the affections of the public at large has done her much good with the critics. Critics tend to be mystified at her success, and to attribute it either to the foolishness of the general public or to the size and spectacle of her vehicles, which, it is argued, could carry absolutely anyone to the heights. After some recent big-budget calamities with lesser stars, the second proposition is getting harder to support. But still critics, while perhaps admitting that Julie Andrews must have something, seem to find themselves unable to enjoy it at first hand.

Partly, I think, this is because she belongs to a class of stars who have never gone down well with critics. What critic ever really loved Jeanette MacDonald as she deserved? Or Deanna Durbin? They both have in common with our Julie the ability to play ladies (or rather to radiate lady-likeness, as opposed to the self-conscious Greer Garson dignity), to convince us that they are genuinely nice without being therefore wishy-washy, to be the good-chum, slightly tomboyish girl that every man's mother seems to hope he will marry. And what's wrong with that?

There are enough roles that demand precisely this combination of qualities, and all too few actresses capable of producing it. Despite which, critics always seem to dismiss such performances as child's play, and look instead to the sort of naked emotionalism which, say, Judy Garland specialised in.

Far be it from me to belittle Judy in order to elevate Deanna, but by adopting the approach she did Judy Garland undoubtedly made things easier for herself: there was always the suffer-along-with-Judy faction ready to pour out sympathy for the person whatever she was actually doing and irrespective of whether she was doing it well or badly. The Deanna Durbins and Julie Andrews of this world have no such ready aid. They have to go out there and deliver the goods. They have to be professionals, and this I think is why Julie Andrews goes down specially well with the Hollywood old guard, those gorgon/governess ladies like Bette Davis and Joan Crawford and Marlene Dietrich who have themselves made a god of professional standards, of always delivering the goods, and now find the younger generation disturbingly dilettante.

Of course, the question still remains: what goods does Julie Andrews deliver, and do we after all want to buy them? To start with the obvious, there is the way she sings. I think just about everyone likes that: we recognise its limitations, that for instance she is no great jazz stylist, or anything of the sort, but then neither does she try to be. She sings straightforward songs straightforwardly, with verve and musical feeling, very much as Jeanette MacDonald did in her day; she is a perfect interpreter of romantic Richard Rodgers, but she can do very well by Gershwin and Weill when she



JULIE ANDREWS IN "STAR!"

gets a chance, as *Star!* admirably demonstrates. She can also dance sufficiently, if not outstandingly, and she can act. As a matter of fact, she can act considerably better than she has mostly been given credit for: she was very good in that generally underestimated film *The Americanisation of Emily*, and it is worth remarking how well she plays—to take one instance—the drunk scene in *Star!* This would have been all too easy to ham or gey or otherwise overdo, but she manages it entirely by nuance, the hardly perceptible extra care which the

consciously drunk use to get themselves through the ordinary activities of life.

What is left is the inexplicable, undefinable extra something that lights up the screen every time a real star is on it. I think it is true to say that whatever this may be, Julie Andrews has a peculiarly English form of it, which tends to be discounted right away by many English reviewers. That is to say that the special precision, the cool, slightly astringent quality of her personality comes in itself as a pleasant surprise to Americans, as something exotic and obviously 'English'.

To us it is something we recognise at once and take for granted, though heaven knows there is no reason these days why we should take it for granted on the screen (it was, for instance, just the quality the girl in *The Collector* should have, and just the one Samantha Eggar obviously lacked). We enjoy it in action: its presence is what prevents *The Sound of Music* from getting too sticky and saccharine. But when we come to tot up the special qualities of Julie Andrews we dismiss it out of hand: that old thing! but everybody has that! Of course, they don't. So Julie Andrews is every grown man's dream nanny, every woman's personal, trusted treasure: hence, most directly, the enormous success of *Mary Poppins* and *The Sound of Music*. That may not be the be-all and end-all of stardom, but then nobody said that screen stars have to do everything. They just have to do their own special thing incomparably better than anyone else can do it. That, undeniably, Julie Andrews does. And, as with all real stars, you are likely to find that if you don't like it, you may all the same find that you rather shamefacedly enjoy lumping it.

ARKADIN

BOOK REVIEWS

HORROR MOVIES, an Illustrated Survey, by Carlos Clarens. (Secker and Warburg, 63s.)

I CANNOT RECALL anyone having considered the aura of sadness that haunts so many horror films, their makers and performers. Yet think of Méliès, the Wizard of Montreuil, dying in a Home for the Destitute 25 years after making his last masterpiece, *The Conquest of the Pole*; think of the mysterious deaths of Murnau and James Whale; the tragic elements in the deaths of Lon Chaney Snr., Laird Cregar, Peter Lorre, Warner Oland (the lycanthrope Yogami in *Werewolf of London*) and Sybille Schmitz, the beautiful Leone of Dreyer's *Vampyr*, who committed suicide in 1955. Think especially of the inimitable Bela Lugosi, the affectionate butt of many a Bob Hope joke (always Lugosi, never Karloff), a Reinhardt Hamlet reduced to encounters with Brooklyn Gorillas and Old Mother Riley, a drug-addict for some twenty years whose epitaph in Purnell's Encyclopedia reads that "Lugosi sometimes so identified himself with his horror roles that he tended to confuse fiction and reality."

In certain respects I am hypersensitive when it comes to taking horror seriously—serious horror, that is—which is possibly why I react violently against one or two of Carlos Clarens' favourites in this well-researched book. Try as I may, I still cannot accept the "aseptic power which overcomes the revulsion of *Les Yeux sans Visage*," nor excuse that "truly Sadian film" *Peeping Tom*. For me the three masterpieces of the genre, and Mr. Clarens partially agrees, are *Vampyr*, *The Bride of Frankenstein* and *Psycho*—though I am disappointed to learn that he has excluded *Psycho* because he seriously regards it as a cross-breeding of the police dossier and the psychiatric case-history. Still, no matter, that horse has long been flogged to death. Nor am I completely won over by Clarens' arguments for devoting a chapter to Science Fiction. I prefer the sun-tanned, cricket-pitch acerbity of Boris Karloff dismissing SF as being about "some damned great ant come crawling out of some damned great hole." I would have thought that films like *Psycho*, *The Birds*, *Alphaville*, *Paris Nous Appartient*, capture post-war angst far more penetratingly than all your *Godzillas* and *Attacks of the Fifty Foot Woman*. For angst, past and present, the obsessional, the visionary, the "night side of life", is Mr. Clarens' theme: and I feel sure that Karloff has tried to map out his often distinguished career along those very lines.

If this element of sadness is absent from Clarens' book, it is partly because he so evidently relishes his subject; indeed, he cares to an extent that precludes, as far as I can tell, a single gaffe. For instance, though he doesn't mention Wilfrid Lawson's *The Terror* or *Tower of Terror*, one feels confident he wouldn't have spelt Wilfrid with an 'e'. Another reason for one's pleasure in the book is its exclusiveness: no dwelling on the nadir of a particular studio or artist. Thus no mention of Peter Lorre's *Face Behind the Mask* or Lugosi's *Devil Bat* or Lionel Atwill's *The Mad Doctor of Market Street* or Stroheim's *The Crime of Dr. Crespi*. Instead a brisk broomstick-ride through Caligarisim, the Browning-Whale heyday, *Vampyr*, Val Lewton, leading up to a justified slap at the predictable mechanics of the average Hammer Horror.

Perhaps the anxiety to do his best by the horror film occasionally strikes a chill and humourless note. There is warmth in his tribute to supporting players—Ouspenskaya, Zucco, Sondergaard, Thesiger.

There is an admirable exactness about some of his capsule judgments, as when he describes *The Incredible Shrinking Man* as being directed "with flat precision by Jack Arnold." But it seems both a pity and a waste to head a chapter 'Children of the Night' unless you put the phrase in context, with Lugosi's introduction, halfway up a great stone stairway, delivered with forbidding simplicity ("I... am Dracula"), before gliding through a giant spider's web, leaving it unbroken, to turn smiling as he gutturally comments on the distant howling of wolves: "Listen to them... the children of the night! What music they make!" I also miss another of Lugosi's memorable dicta, from the 1944 *Return of the Vampire*, when he presents his coffin and his instructions to a nonplussed receptionist in a London hotel: "I do not wish to be disturbed. I always sleep by day."

Though the illustrations help a lot, Clarens is good at sharing with us his disappointment at not having been able to see certain key films which have disappeared, such as Murnau's *Januskopf* and Curtiz's *Mystery of the Wax Museum*. And he offers tantalising glimpses of films which he apparently has seen and we perhaps have not: Freund's *Mad Love*, Hillyer's *Dracula's Daughter*, Curtiz's *Dr. X* and *The Walking Dead*, almost all of Chaney Senior's films, and a 1933 British film entitled *The Ghoul* which boasts Karloff, Hardwicke, Thesiger, Kathleen Harrison and Ralph Richardson in the cast.

Finally, in this expensive but exceedingly stimulating book, one error and a handful of omissions. I find no mention of *House of Mystery*, a really far-out Nils Asther vehicle in which he played an Oriental who enables a legless man (Ralph Morgan) to commit murders by mesmerising him into regaining his legs. No mention either of *The Door With Seven Locks*, in which Leslie Banks virtually repeated his superb Zaroff characterisation as a mad Count with a cellarful of torture instruments; or *Dead Men Tell No Tales*, in which Emlyn Williams led a double life as a public school headmaster by day and a French hunchbacked mastermind by night! Also I would have given Anton Walbrook credit for his *tour de force* in Robison's talkie remake of *The Student of Prague*; Veidt similarly for *Le Joueur d'Echecs*; Francis Lederer for his recent resuscitations of *Dracula* and *Dr. Moreau*; and Basil Rathbone for his comically indestructible, Shakespeare-ranting skinflint in *Tales of Terror*.

Supercilious of me to talk of error, but I would suggest, indeed positively urge Mr. Clarens to take another look at *The Beast With Five Fingers*. His skimmed account of it sounds like a convenient device for ending a chapter and an era. Admittedly it was a critical and box-office flop; admittedly it had a tiresome hero (Robert Alda) and some tedious comic relief from J. Carrol Naish's detective. But edit these sequences out and you have a 70-odd minute Robert Florey masterpiece, a haunting study in wild and inexplicable hallucination.

PETER JOHN DYER

SHAKESPEARE ON SILENT FILM, by Robert Hamilton Ball. Illustrated. (Allen and Unwin, 63s.)

"POX LEAVE THY damnable faces and begin." Hamlet's impatient instruction to the mummer in the dumb show probably represents the uninstructed layman's attitude toward silent Shakespearean film, with memories of absurdly speeded up eye-rolling and mugging. Perhaps some people do not even know that there were, from extremely early days, any such films made. I find people constantly uncertain as to whether some film they saw long ago was silent or talking. The layman in fact may be forgiven if he approaches a book like this with some scepticism. But the pictures, marvellously chosen, very rare in many instances, are likely to hook him at once—Forbes-Robertson on the beach in *Hamlet*, Méliès himself as Hamlet, Mounet-Sully frog-like by the grave as Hamlet, Sarah Bernhardt fencing with Laertes, Asta Nielsen as a Hamlet who was a woman in disguise—will the line stretch out to the crack of doom? And much of this activity (one *Hamlet* was shot in a day!) dates back into the penumbra of the 'flicks' before the First World War.

One knew about it vaguely of course—as a residue of valuable archives. Sarah Bernhardt even jiggling and panting was better than no Bernhardt at all (her films like her gramophone record have traduced her fame simply by being played at the wrong speed, so that a frantic haste is the chief impression for posterity). Gazing at the Gishes she said in all generosity, "They are my successors." But what I for one certainly did not know was that, given the scholarship, wit and sheer detective perseverance of this professor of English at City University, New York, a record as enthralling as this could be compiled. To generalise, what is so extraordinary—seeing that in a silent film all that seems to constitute Shakespeare's genius had perforce to be jettisoned—is the amount of real artistic delicacy which went into such things as *Macbeth* in one reel. The book is an example of how occasionally really deep study of a field which



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elsewhere might be quickly ridden over reveals a mass of treasure.

There is fascination in reading these detailed synopses—the skill with which the plays are condensed, the insertion of skeletal subtitles derived from the true text. Professor Ball has tracked down an immense number of these early efforts (I must not give the impression that they are all *Hamlets*, for the Historical Plays came in for treatment too, let alone the ever popular *The Taming of the Shrew*—one of them by Griffith). He writes of them affectionately but critically and does not eschew the occasional witty barb which hindsight can deliver. In a sense the stills speak loudly for themselves in this way: Theda Bara as Juliet being perhaps no more unlikely than Francis X. Bushman as Romeo (two different films)—but it takes a man with a real sense of the past and wide love of the theatre to make this kind of arcane subject illuminating. I confess I was surprised as well as enthralled. That the infant cinema should like to invoke the prestige of The Bard as part of its claim to be an art is less surprising than the evidence here that it was in fact the cinema which introduced Shakespeare to the mass audience, in the United States, in Italy and even in Germany. Here is a bit of art history which might easily have been allowed to slip. Notes, bibliography, index, etc. are all excellent.

PHILIP HOPE-WALLACE

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CORRESPONDENCE

RoudJon Bazin

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

SIR,—Richard Roud's waspish and, at times, hysterical review of *What is Cinema?* (SIGHT AND SOUND, Spring 1968) rightly and helpfully points out a number of regrettable type-setting and copy-editing errors—which are being corrected in a second printing now at press and soon to be available in the U.K. through Cambridge University Press. And Roud offers two or three acceptable alternative translations, among others which are debatable. But he nowhere addresses himself to the substance of the translation, nor to the many controversial questions Bazin raises concerning the nature of cinema.

Surely, a reasoned evaluation of both Bazin and the translation as a whole would be preferable to wasting valuable space on humbugging and patently disingenuous rambling about what are clearly further misprints or on furnishing us with reminiscences of the Bazin he knew, with off-hand remarks about 'the cinema since 1959' or 'the despised principles of montage—each shot becomes shorter and shorter'(!). Why only this minute inspection of the scattered spoor of the copy-editor? And indeed Roud's own scholarship is hardly above reproach. He invents an altogether remarkable interpretation of 'one-shot sequence'. He imagines that it is Gray rather than Bazin who referred to *Thomas Garner*. He fails to notice that Bazin had in mind Greene's book title when he wrote *La Puissance et la Gloire*, not the title Ford's film ultimately bore. And Roud conveniently neglects to mention that Bazin himself was not always consistent in film title references. (For that matter, Bazin doesn't even cite Magny as Roud imagines.)

At which point may we indulge in a little of Roud's *mesquinerie* and say that 'someone in London' is careless too, for no less than two accents are missing in his brief review, and the gender of *expression* is inverted. *Oh là là!*

To imply that Bazin is not a difficult author to translate is egregious nonsense.

Finally, may we draw Roud's attention to a certain ancient rule of logic: 'LATIUS HOS QUAM PRAEMISSAS CONCLUSIO NON VULT.'

Yours faithfully,

HUGH GRAY

(University of California, Los Angeles)

California, U.S.A.

ERNEST CALLENBACH

(University of California Press, Berkeley)

British Animators

SIR,—The organisers of the Annecy International Festival of Animated Films, 1969, are mounting an exhibition which may turn into a permanent museum, to illustrate the history of animation. They would like to devote part of the exhibition to British pioneer animators, for example, Frank Smith, George Studdy, Anson Dyer, George Pal, Len Lye—"all the more so because they are so little known."

If any of your readers has information, documents, drawings or photographs which would be of interest in this connection, I should be glad to pass them on or to put correspondents in direct touch with the organisers of the Festival.

Yours faithfully,

RALPH STEPHENSON

Paris-Pullman Cinema,
65 Drayton Gardens,
London, S.W.10.

Godard and the US

SIR,—Your excellent article concerning Godard's tour of American colleges (SIGHT AND SOUND, Summer 1968) left me anxious and alarmed. I refer especially to those portions recording his dialogue with students at Berkeley, California.

I am twenty years of age and have been an active member of the love-orientated hippie movement for divorcement from a degenerating American society by establishment of a separate subculture of exiles (drop-outs). Yet, recently, I left the Berkeley area because I could not reconcile myself to a newer, revolutionary violence and bitterness. It seems to me that the reasoning of the new activists is ominously aimed toward the proverbial dilemma of the country whose well-meaning revolution is displaced by a more radical group who condemn the previous reformers as being revisionists, and who, in turn, are themselves overthrown and purged by super-anarchists who insist that they have triumphed over reactionaries. Godard is walking a most fickle line over the abyss. It took all his

seasoned wit and paradox to justify his camera as a 'theoretical gun' to activists ready to condemn him for being commercial or superfluous. It seems clear that it will be the next wave of radicals who will remain unaffected by Godard's analogies and pronounce him as useless as Kirilov in *La Chinoise*.

I fear Godard's justifications for his existence (like himself) cannot survive within a real revolution. I am upset, since it only emphasises the uncompromising irrationality of the violence that my former hero Godard supports, though it be self-destructive.

Yours faithfully,
TIMOTHY FABRIZIO

Boston,
Massachusetts

FESTIVALS 68: VENICE

continued from page 181

rummaging dustbins for relics of their favourite philosopher Jean-Sol Partre, while their friend, a young man who has invented a piano which mixes cocktails, consoles himself by finding romance with a girl from a convent who is fading away like the Lady of the Camellias because she has a lily growing in her heart. So far, so fantastical, with nice performances by Sami Frey, Jacques Perrin and Marie-France Pisier, but suddenly the film runs away with itself and slopes off rapidly into dull imbecility.

Galileo, directed by Liliana Cavani with Cyril Cusack in the leading role: not, as one briefly hoped, an attempt at the Brecht play, but a conversation piece which tries hard to make contemporary connections but ends up as respectable, talkative and dull. Mentionable chiefly because the settings, colour and costumes are beautiful. Then *Fuoco*, directed by Gian-Vittorio Baldi and heartily detested, it seems, by most people at the Festival. Though the theme is hardly original (a man shuts himself up in his room one day with his wife, child and an arsenal of weapons, and starts firing from the window—just because), I liked the grainy photography and the moodily deliberate pace. Above all I liked the strange, ritualistic touches: for instance, a scene where he systematically strips his wife (she is in a drugged sleep), wraps her body in a sheet, places a pillow over her head, and shoots her. Here one can at least see a disciplined imagination at work, which is more than one can say for most of this year's tearful, immature and self-centred offerings.

TOM MILNE

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

UNITED ARTISTS for *Lord Love a Duck, The Bed Sitting Room, The Bride Wore Black, Hour of the Wolf, Street Scene*.
M-G-M for *Point Blank, An American Romance, Hallelujah, The Crowd, Billy the Kid, The Big Parade, Show People*.
COLUMBIA PICTURES for *In Cold Blood, The Swimmer*.
20th CENTURY-FOX for *One Born Every Minute, The Secret Life of an American Wife, Decline and Fall, Star!*
WARNER-PATHE for *Bonnie and Clyde, Cool Hand Luke, Casablanca*.
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W. H. ALLEN



FILM GUIDE

Films of special interest to SIGHT AND SOUND readers are denoted by one, two, three or four stars.

***BATTLE FOR ANZIO, THE** (Columbia) Long-winded account of how Rome was not taken in a day, with war correspondent Robert Mitchum musing at length about what went wrong and why. Saved by some effectively staged action sequences which say a lot more about war a lot more succinctly. (Peter Falk, Arthur Kennedy; director, Edward Dmytryk. Technicolor, Panavision.)

BIRDS COME TO DIE IN PERU (Rank) Romain Gary's first film, symbol-ridden but strikingly photographed; about a nymphomaniac's restless attempts to overcome her frigidity amid the empty South American beaches where thousands of birds flock to die and the men become her prey. (Jean Seberg, Maurice Ronet. Technicolor.)

***BOFORS GUN, THE** (Rank) Lethal conflict on guard duty in Germany between tight, prim bombardier David Warner and wild Irish gunner Nicol Williamson. Jack Gold's direction gets some good lowering atmosphere, but not enough to persuade you that John McGrath's play is generating light as well as heat. (Ian Holm, John Thaw. Technicolor.)

*****BRIDE WORE BLACK, THE** (United Artists) In his playful homage to Hitchcock, Truffaut weaves a fairy-tale out of the multiple murders by a single-minded woman seeking revenge on the five men responsible for her bridegroom's death. (Jeanne Moreau. Eastman Colour, print by DeLuxe.) Reviewed.

CHARLY (C.I.R.O.) How a man with the mind of a child of six becomes a genius virtually overnight after a brain operation. Manifestly intended to be provocative, but only succeeds in being embarrassingly coy. Ralph Nelson peps it up with some devastatingly inappropriate split screen trickery. (Cliff Robertson, Claire Bloom. Technicolor, Techniscope.)

****DECLINE AND FALL** (Fox) Evelyn Waugh's comic charade, set free of its 1920s context but retaining its gaily anachronistic invention in depicting the horrors encountered by Paul Pennyfeather during his fall from grace. Slight falling-off towards the end, but pleasing general air of literacy. (Robin Phillips, Genevieve Page, Donald Wolfit, Leo McKern; director, John Krish. Technicolor.) Reviewed.

***DETECTIVE, THE** (Fox) Ambitious and almost successful attempt to denounce the Fascist tendencies of American society through the story of an honest cop who discovers that he has unwittingly contributed to the corruption he is trying to fight. Over-significant, but with some tough, Ed McBain style dialogue. (Frank Sinatra, Lee Remick; director, Gordon Douglas. DeLuxe Colour, Panavision.)

DEVIL'S BRIGADE, THE (United Artists) William Holden patiently fashions a bunch of thugs and misfits into a crack special service unit. Should really be called *Son of Dirty Dozen*, but much less expert than Aldrich's film. (Cliff Robertson, Vince Edwards; director, Andrew V. McLaglen. DeLuxe Colour, Panavision.)

DON'T RAISE THE BRIDGE, LOWER THE RIVER (Columbia) Jerry Lewis sadly below par in a tedious comedy involving him with arch con-man Terry-Thomas, an assortment of British eccentrics and a couple of shady Arabs. The pace is frantic, but the jokes are dim. (Jacqueline Pearce, Bernard Cribbins; director, Jerry Paris. Technicolor.)

*****FATHER** (Contemporary) Istvan Szabo's haunting study of the mythology of the Stalinist personality cult, seen through the eyes of a boy who recreates the image of his dead father. One of the best of the new Hungarian films, marred only by some too explicit symbolism. (Miklos Gabor, Klari Tolnay, Andras Balint.)

*****FINIAN'S RAINBOW** (Warner-Pathé) Fred Astaire still taps all other chaps to death in a sumptuous version of the 1947 stage musical. Francis Ford Coppola carries over into the big-screen big-time the *joie de vivre* of *You're a Big Boy Now*, and a pleasing touch of native asperity keeps the Irish whimsy at bay. (Petula Clark, Tommy Steele; Technicolor, Panavision.)

*****GERTRUD** (Contemporary) Dreyer's majestic masterpiece—a film you either love to distraction or utterly loathe. See Elliott Stein's article in our Spring 1965 issue. (Nina Pens Rode, Bendt Rothe.)

GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY, THE (United Artists) Efficient, opportunistic Continental Western which cuts its own throat by having delusions of grandeur. Every scene is drawn out till its suspense more than snaps, and the film drags on for 148 minutes. (Clint Eastwood, Eli Wallach, Lee Van Cleef; director, Sergio Leone. Technicolor, Techniscope.)

****GRADUATE, THE** (United Artists) A hilarious script and a fair amount of gimmickry vie with the more serious pretensions of Mike Nichols' second feature to produce a film less than the sum of its parts. Enjoyable though, with a virtuoso performance from Anne Bancroft. (Dustin Hoffman, Katharine Ross, Technicolor, Panavision.)

GREEN BERETS, THE (Warner-Pathé) Forlorn attempt by John Wayne to do a Vietnam war film in terms of Good Guys and Bad Guys and soldiers doing their duty. As a war movie, merely dull; as hawkish propaganda, it has a boomerang's unerring aim. (David Janssen, Jim Hutton, Aldo Ray; directors, John Wayne, Ray Kellogg. Technicolor, Panavision.)

*****HOUR OF THE WOLF** (United Artists) Brilliant Gothic fantasy in which Bergman turns the premise of *Persona* upside-down and continues his exploration of the artist's responsibilities and torments. (Max von Sydow, Liv Ullmann.) Reviewed.

IMPOSSIBLE YEARS, THE (M-G-M) Arch and very leaden domestic comedy with David Niven as a psychiatrist harassed by his inability to understand his rebellious teenage daughter. (Cristina Ferrare, Lola Albright; director, Michael Gordon. Metrocolor, Panavision.)

****INTERLUDE** (Columbia) Kevin Billington's big-screen debut: carefully unsensational. A basically novelettish story about a girl reporter's short romance with a famous conductor, constantly illuminated by little touches of acute observation, by sharp playing from Oskar Werner and Virginia Maskell, and by Gerry Fisher's beautiful colour photography. (Barbara Ferris. Technicolor.) Reviewed.

***LONG DAY'S DYING, THE** (Paramount) Maddeeningly pretentious, wildly arty direction of a script which makes an interesting attempt to say (via a story about three British soldiers, one German, wandering loose on the battlefield) that a man can revel in his expertise as a killer and still be a pacifist. (David Hemmings, Tom Bell, Alan Dobie; director, Peter Collinson. Technicolor.)

MAYERLING (Warner-Pathé) The Romantic theme (triumph of passion over politics) gets rather lost amid the heavy-handed epic treatment in Terence Young's remake of the 1935 classic about the heir to the Hapsburg Empire and his fatal passion for a girl of inferior birth. Even James Mason's thundering performance as the Emperor is muffled by the constant clattering of horses' hooves and Francis Lai's merciless score. (Omar Sharif, Catherine Deneuve, Ava Gardner. Technicolor, Panavision.)

NOBODY RUNS FOREVER (Rank) Soporific thriller about a detective from the Australian outback sent to London to arrest the High Commissioner. Plenty of gloss, but leaden-footed direction kills what little suspense there is. (Rod Taylor, Christopher Plummer, Lilli Palmer; director, Ralph Thomas. Eastman Colour.)

ORDER OF THE DAISY, THE (Contemporary) Jean-Pierre Mocky fantasy about an expert forger who uses his talent to swap spouses and rectify the marriage registers. Starts well, but blows up into the usual Mocky excess. (Claude Rich, Francis Blanche, Michel Serrault.)

****PLAYTIME** (Screenspace) Jacques Tati's episodic account of Hulot at large in an automated Paris, finding that within every steely skyscraper there's an intransigent Frenchman fighting to get out. Philosophical, but not all that funny. (Barbara Dennek. Eastman Colour, 70 mm.) Reviewed.

PRUDENCE AND THE PILL (Fox) Coy and sexless comedy about contraceptive pill swapping, in which only the jokes manage to abort. (David Niven, Deborah Kerr; director, Fielder Cook. DeLuxe Colour.)

*****QUESTION OF RAPE, A** (Miracle) Doniol-Valcroze's *Le Viol*, made in Sweden. A cool, strikingly elegant Robbe-Grilletian exercise about a woman at grips with an intruder who may or may not be real. Might be criticised for its metaphysics, must be admired for its *mise en scène*. (Bibi Andersson, Bruno Cremer. Eastman Colour.) Reviewed.

***ROMANCE FOR TRUMPET** (Contemporary) Sentimental Czech tale of a village boy's love affair with a merry-go-round girl. Some nicely observed nostalgia for melancholic youth, but irretrievably marred by irritatingly nudging direction. (Jaromír Hanzlik, Zuzana Cíganová; director, Otakar Vávra.)

***STAR** (Fox) Quintessential Clapham to Broadway biography, leaving no starchy myth unturned and no showbiz cliché unrespected. Super-confident production, nostalgic songs; likely to lead to ineradicable future confusion between the legends of Gertrude Lawrence and Julie Andrews. (Daniel Massey, Richard Crenna; director, Robert Wise. DeLuxe Colour, Todd-AO.)

****STRANGE AFFAIR, THE** (Paramount) Routine tale of young policeman who finds that being honest isn't easy. Turned into a bizarre, engaging fantasy by David Greene's offbeat but carefully controlled direction. (Michael York, Susan George, Jeremy Kemp. Technicolor.) Reviewed.

***STRANGER, THE** (Paramount) Despite painstaking fidelity to the Camus novel, Visconti somehow fails to translate it into a non-literary medium. The Technicolor images—like the dazzling Algerian locations—destroy the calculated neutrality of the famous *style blanc*, while the very thoughtfulness of Mastroianni's performance in the title role combines with his essentially glamorous presence to suggest a hero whose philosophy is more reflective than intuitive. (Anna Karina.)

****SWIMMER, THE** (Columbia) Despite the menthol filter associations of Frank Perry's directional style, John Cheever's story of a crazed commuter's nine-mile odyssey through suburban swimming-pools survives as a haunting and disturbing film. (Burt Lancaster, Janet Landgard, Janice Rule. Technicolor.) Reviewed.

***TANT QU'ON A LA SANTÉ** (Connoisseur) Pierre Etaix pits himself against the world again in a series of loosely linked sketches. A few inspired gags along the way, but none of the sustained invention of *The Sutor*. (Denise Péronne, Alain Janey, Simone Fonder.)

*****2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY** (M-G-M) Kubrick's view of man in space, and one of the few giant movies that one wouldn't want an inch smaller. Marvellously ingenious, tantalising and intelligent, as well as having the irresistible allure of a space age motor show. (Keir Dullea, Gary Lockwood, William Sylvester. Metrocolor, Super Panavision/Cinerama.)

WAIT UNTIL DARK (Warner-Pathé) Stage-bound spine-chiller about a resourceful blind girl's attempt to deal with assorted murderers and con-men who invade her flat in search of stolen heroin. Director Terence Young wrings every last drop of pathos from the situation. Alan Arkin's psychotic villain provides welcome relief from Audrey Hepburn's girl guide heroics. (Richard Crenna. Technicolor.)

***WHERE WERE YOU WHEN THE LIGHTS WENT OUT?** (M-G-M) This being a Doris Day movie, the answer is asleep on the sofa. For all that, this bedroom comedy about the day New York was blacked out is often very funny, thanks to Patrick O'Neal, Lola Albright and, in particular, Robert Morse. (Director, Hy Averback. Metrocolor, Panavision.)

****YELLOW SUBMARINE** (United Artists) The Beatles myth enshrined in a full length cartoon. Whimsical, erratic, alternately endearing and exasperating, and inventively derivative of 60 years of graphic design. (Director, George Dunning. DeLuxe Colour.) Reviewed.

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